

Paula GARB

They Came to Stay

North Americans in the U.S.S.R.



Impressions
of the
USSR





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They Came to Stay is the unknown story of people who moved to the Soviet Union from the United States and Canada. Swiftly, it pulls the reader into the tumultuous experience of adjusting to a whole new life-style. Paula Garb presents an insider's view of this unusual community that began forming in the 1920s, leaving her reader with an indelible impression of life in the U.S.S.R.

Anna Preikshas came to Siberia from West Virginia in 1922 with hundreds of other Americans who helped build the local coal industry. Harry Rapoport arrived in the Ukraine in 1934 from Montreal; he fought in the Soviet Army during World War II. Carl Watts emigrated in 1952 with his brother and parents to the Ukraine from Hamilton, Ontario. Patty Montet moved from Baton Rouge, Louisiana in 1982 to live with her Russian husband. These are just a few of the many people whose stories comprise an unforgettable chronicle of early and recent Soviet history; it discloses little known facts about the Stalin era, shows the changes made subsequently, and gives an idea of public opinion in the 1980s. *They Came to Stay* provides insights, evokes wonder, tears and laughter.



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Born in Denver, Colorado, in 1948, Paula Garb grew up in the Bay Area of California. While still in high school in San Francisco she became interested in the Soviet Union and concerned about improving U.S.-Soviet relations. Since 1975 she and her two sons have lived in Moscow where she graduated from Moscow University with a major in history and a minor in anthropology.

She works in Moscow as a writer and translator. Her previous book, *Where the Old Are Young*, is about the long-living people in the Soviet Caucasus and is in its second printing. Why she moved to the Soviet Union and how she adjusted to the country are explained in *They Came to Stay*.

Impressions of the USSR

Books in the IMPRESSIONS OF THE USSR SERIES put out by Progress Publishers offer authentic accounts of life in the Soviet Union. Authors published in this series are eyewitnesses; they have all visited the Soviet Union and have seen life there at first hand. Theirs is an unbiased story about the men and women who transformed old Russia into one of the world's advanced nations. Books in this series deal with a variety of topics analyzing the swiftly growing Soviet society.

To my parents, Lillian and Leonard Garb

Paula GARB

**They Came
to Stay**
North Americans
in the **U.S.S.R.**



PROGRESS PUBLISHERS
MOSCOW

Пола Гарб

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It is quite likely that I never would have written this book if not for the deep respect my parents instilled in me from an early age for the country where I was born, the United States, and the

country where my father was born, Russia. I was raised with a built-in shield against anti-Sovietism, so I did not feel it was an outrageous act when I opted to live in the U.S.S.R. At the same time I have never stopped appreciating the land of my birth and of my roots. Thus, my ultimate gratitude is to my mother and father, my enlightened guides and faithful supporters in my efforts to help build bridges between the two countries I call home.

Introduction

"If Russia isn't such a bad place to live, then why do people from there defect to the United States and not the other way around?" is a common question I am asked in the U.S. Far more is known about Soviet citizens who move to the U.S. than about people from Canada and the United States who have for one reason or another elected to make their homes in the Soviet Union. These people raised in North America are not defectors and would object to being called so. Their experiences are not proof that life in general is better or worse in the Soviet Union than in North America—only different in some ways and similar in others. However, as people who have learned to adapt to life in the Soviet Union, they have gained valuable insights into a country whose culture and daily life-style are so often misunderstood.

My acquaintance with the Soviet Union dates back to July 1965 when, as a seventeen-year-old tourist I fell in love with a Russian guide during a tour of Lenin Hills on my first evening in Moscow. Since then, my practical knowledge of Soviet life has been based on marriage and divorce in the Soviet Union (yes, it was the tour guide), and raising two boys (born in 1967 and 1972) who have attended ordinary Soviet schools from the first grade. I have studied at Moscow University, worked for several Soviet media organizations, learned how to cope with Soviet bureaucracy and resolve day-to-day problems, and have shared the joys and sorrows of close Soviet friends who have stood by me through it all.

Over the years I have met many North Americans who have put down roots far from their native continent. It is impossible to include in this book the life histories of all the people who have migrated to the Soviet Union from Canada and the United States since the early 1920s. There are too many of them. How-

ever, the biographies presented are representative of the general "community," in terms of when these people arrived and how their lives have evolved. I must apologize to my other friends whose stories will not be in this book. I am sure that they will understand.

When I talked to these individuals I was interested in what their lives had been like in Canada and the United States, what prompted them to move to the Soviet Union, what influenced them to stay, how they coped with the new environment, how and to what extent they adapted, what development they observed in the society, and what changes occurred in their lives. The personal narratives follow one another in each of the book's two parts—Why They Came; Where They Are Today. Each biography begins in Part I, and concludes in Part II.

Only a few of the approximately one hundred people I interviewed did not want to be part of this project. One man was extremely shy and found it too difficult to talk about himself. Another was bitter about his life in the Soviet Union and did not want his feelings made public. And still another thought his career opportunities could be hurt if his immigrant origins were examined in the kind of detailed biography I wanted to present in this book. Although these were certainly minority sentiments among the people I found, they reflect a generally accepted understanding that being an immigrant is not easy and not everyone feels comfortable in that role.

The vast majority of the people I contacted, however, were invariably eager to recall their past, discussed their personal lives openly and voiced their opinions candidly. During our conversations, lasting several hours at a time, I felt as though I too was experiencing the lives of these ordinary yet at the same time extraordinary people as they broke down language, cultural, historical, social, and political barriers between North America and the Soviet Union.

PART I

WHY THEY CAME

Chapter One

JOINING THE SOCIALIST EXPERIMENT

My search for Canadians and Americans who settled in places other than Moscow, which is where I reside, began in August 1985 in the West Siberian city of Kemerovo, which is located northeast of Novosibirsk in the Kuznetsk Coal Basin (Kuzbas, for short).

Throughout the entire four hours I spent on the plane from Moscow I was totally engrossed in reading the history of a colony of workers from the United States that existed in Kemerovo between 1921 and 1926.¹ I was particularly fascinated by the author's description of the long and difficult journey of the first colonists who sailed from New York on April 8, 1922, to Siberia, and their initial impressions of the small mining community with its drab housing, unpaved streets and stray pigs, geese and chickens. When it was time to leave the plane, I envisioned the Kemerovo of the 1920s as I imagined the American settlers had first viewed it from the train station on the western bank of the Tom River. Walking down the plane's landing steps onto a modern airfield and seeing the airport building and highway nearby brought me back to the 1980s. Yet for several minutes that vision of old Kemerovo and the American pioneers stepping off their train flashed like a kaleidoscope. I visualized simultaneously the scenery of both the 1920s and the 1980s.

It was then that I first realized what strong affinity I felt for my earlier compatriots who had ventured to Soviet Russia, wanting to understand and reach out a friendly hand to the trailblazers of this dynamic new frontier reminiscent of our own pioneers' westward push to the Pacific coast. There I was, over sixty years later, retracing their path to Siberia, only on a jet airplane and with the assurance of having, at the end of the road, private accommodations in a modern hotel, not a tent or makeshift shared housing. I was anxious to learn all I could about

¹ J. P. Morray, *Project Kuzbas. American Workers in Siberia (1921-1926)*, International Publishers, New York, 1983.

the everyday experiences of the American colonists and to find out what had happened to those who stayed on in Siberia after the project ended in 1926.

All this information was to unfold in the next several days as I searched archive material at the local history museum, talked to the Soviet Union's foremost historian on the colony, Dr. Yevgenia Krivosheeva of Kemerovo University, and met several media people there who had, like Dr. Krivosheeva, interviewed former Americans from the colony who had remained in Kemerovo until they passed away in the 1970s and early 1980s.

I learned that one of the few people in the Soviet Union today who was a member of that colony was Anna Preikshas, a resident of Dnepropetrovsk who had lived in the Ukraine since 1944. It is with her life story that I decided to embark upon the tale of North Americans who came to stay in the Soviet Union.

* * *

Anna was born in the mining town of Thomas, West Virginia in 1910. Her mother had come to America from Lithuania to escape poverty; her father, a socialist, had come from Lithuania in 1907 to evade the tsar's police. The couple met and married in the U.S. Anna, their first child, learned English from her father and neighbors, and Lithuanian from her mother.

At the age of five Anna followed an older girlfriend to school and insisted she be allowed to join the classes. Finally, the teacher relented, permitting this eager child to start school one year early. Because the town was small, three grades were taught in one room by one teacher. The teacher would instruct a group of students while the others did written work. By the time Anna entered the fifth grade she was expert at keeping up with both her written classroom assignments and with what the teacher was instructing another grade. In this way she was able to skip from the fifth grade to the seventh, which was the last grade taught in her settlement of Kempton, several miles from Thomas.

One of Anna's earliest and most vivid childhood memories was of an autumn night in 1916 when the Ku Klux Klan burned a cross in a clearing on the hill opposite the family's house. "Late that night," recalled Anna, "Mother found a note on the doorstep giving my father an ultimatum to leave town in twenty-four hours or he'd be tarred and feathered and carried out on a rail.

Faced with such a cruel death, my father quickly fled before daybreak. He returned two years later when the political hysteria had subsided. That was seventy years ago; it was something terrible." Anna explained, "My father was a socialist; he was organizing a miners' union, and for that he was being persecuted."

Anna's father, John Preikshas, spent those two years in Kansas and Colorado looking for work. "Two or three days after he found a job," added Anna, "he would be fired; they didn't want him around because he was a labor organizer."

In 1918, after the socialist revolution in Russia in November 1917, the miners in Anna's hometown began discussing the Bolsheviks (Communists) in Russia. "Of course, those youngsters who were from rich families, the children of the mine owners and some others in my school, repeating their parents' sentiments, always blamed the Bolsheviks for all the misfortunes in Russia," recalled Anna. "For instance, in 1921 there was a long drought in the Volga region and all the crops perished, resulting in millions of deaths because of the great famine. The newspapers commented on it, and cartoons showed the Bolsheviks with swords crossed in their mouths and snakes crawling out of their hair. These absurd lies were always discussed in class, too. One boy was always pointing his finger at me saying, 'Oh, you Bolsheviks, you're eating children in Russia.'"

While Bolsheviks were not eating children in Soviet Russia, the new republic was having grave difficulties. At the beginning of 1921 output in the country's large-scale industry was one-fifth of what it had been before World War I, the steel and mechanical engineering industries were in ruins. Paralysis of transportation had broken the economic ties between different regions and between agriculture and industry. And agricultural output was sixty per cent of its prewar level.¹

Poverty was the rule in tsarist Russia for many centuries, long before World War I, but after over three years of war (1914-1918) the situation became even worse, tipping the scales in favor of revolution. However, instead of launching into full-scale economic reconstruction after World War I, the fledgling revolutionary government was forced to spend another three years in civil

¹ See: *History of the U.S.S.R.*, Vol. II, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, pp. 121-22.

war and fighting military intervention by several Western nations, including the United States. Six years of war in both industrial and agricultural regions left the people without even minimal supplies of food and manufactured goods.

The economic blockade by the Western countries gave Soviet Russia no choice but to restore its economy with its own resources. It embarked on an ambitious reconstruction plan known as GOELRO (drafted by the State Commission for the Electrification of Russia) after it was approved in December 1920 by the Eighth All-Russia Congress of Soviets. The plan was to introduce electricity in the country on a wide scale, especially in industry, and in ten to fifteen years double the prewar industrial level and reorganize the economy, including agriculture, on the basis of large-scale production.¹

The New Economic Policy (NEP) adopted in the early 1920s was designed to facilitate reconstruction by allowing some free enterprise, including foreign businesses. Thus, NEP was a policy that granted entrepreneurs certain concessions while maintaining public ownership of the main means of production.

While the Soviet government was charting its economic program, thousands of working people in the United States, Canada and Western Europe were offering not only financial support and other donations to Soviet Russia, but also their labor. Lenin felt it expedient not only to attract foreign businesses but also skilled workers and farmers from advanced Western countries to help out in the economic reconstruction. He also believed it was the internationalist duty of the Soviet state to give these workers the opportunity to move to Soviet Russia if they so desired, whether their reasons for immigrating be lack of employment in their own countries, the wish to be a part of the experiment to build a socialist society, or both.

Thus, it was necessary to develop immigration policies that served both the interests of the Soviet state and the individuals who were volunteering their skills and their enthusiasm. These people were made to feel welcome and needed in the young Soviet republic and, at the same time, were informed of the austere living conditions.

The resolution "On American Industrial Immigration" passed by the Council of Labor and Defense on June 22, 1921, stated those

¹ *History of the U.S.S.R.*, p. 128.

policies.¹ The resolution put an end to the immigration of individuals that had begun spontaneously in 1919 and initiated group immigration.

One of the most outstanding immigrant projects of the 1920s was the Kuzbas Autonomous Industrial Colony in Kemerovo. It was the brainchild of Herbert F. Calvert, born in California, William D. Haywood, born in Utah, and Sebald J. Rutgers of Holland. All three were socialists and staunch supporters of unions and welcomed the socialist revolution in Russia. Each was eager to see just how the experiment of workers' power was functioning under the new Soviet government and was anxious to lend a helping hand.

What the men wanted was an industrial project where skilled workers, primarily from the United States, could both make a contribution to the Russian economy and use the project to demonstrate what workers could accomplish if they not only labored on an enterprise but managed it as well.

After some negotiation an agreement was reached between the Soviet government and the originators of the plan. The project met with resistance from some of Lenin's associates, but Lenin himself stood behind the idea and turned it into a reality.

Each applicant was required to sign a statement accepting the conditions laid down by the American Organization Committee in New York and the Soviet government in Moscow. Most important was the signing of a paper which stated that the applicants had been informed of all the material difficulties they would face in war-torn Russia. One clause of the paper in particular conveyed the Soviet government's recognition of the complicated situation: "The members of the Unit pledge themselves to take into consideration the extreme nervousness of the hungry and exhausted Russian workers and peasants, and to try by all means to avoid friction, jealousy, or misunderstandings, and to attempt by all means to establish friendly and amicable relations."²

A thirty-two page booklet promoting the project was written by the American Organization Committee. The introductory section describes the spirit of the project as "...a plan that will stimulate the imagination of men of industrial vision, a plan

¹ *Leninsky sbornik* (Lenin Miscellany), Vol. 20, Moscow 1932, p. 202.

² J. P. Morray, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

for the first industrial colony in the world where engineers will find freedom to work out experiments they cannot attempt under the profit system, and where workers will find that self-government, that sense of social creativeness, that solidarity and equality they have never found anywhere in the history of the world until this present hour.”¹

When the Preikshas family heard about plans for organizing an American colony of workers to help build up the crucially-needed mining industry in Kemerovo, they did not hesitate to join. Due to his union organizing in the mines, John was again out of work. He was a man ahead of his times. Today union membership is an accepted way of life in the U.S. mining industry, but at that time it was considered almost treasonous to join a labor union.

Another of the family's considerations in deciding to travel to distant Soviet Russia was Anna's future. She was a bright girl, but there was no way the family could afford to send her to a near-by town to complete her education after she finished the seventh grade in her local school. The future of her two younger brothers, Eugene and Emil, was also important. Their father was sure that in a country run by the workers and peasants everything would be possible.

Anna Preikshas' family, having signed up with Project Kuzbas in 1922, was among the approximately 20,000 immigrants from the United States and Canada to arrive in the Soviet Union between 1920 and 1925.² They sailed to Petrograd from New York in July 1922. The picture of Anna with her parents and two brothers standing on deck with other colonists shows a tall girl of twelve, her serious face making her appear older than her years. It was this maturity that would help her fathom the new world she would enter in just a few weeks.

When the American pioneers arrived in Petrograd they saw a city in bad repair. “As a child I remember seeing workers in the street fixing the cobblestones, the roads and the houses that were dilapidated,” recalled Anna. Passing through the country by railway on their way to Siberia, Anna was struck by the terrible poverty: “We saw so many beggars in the streets; many were

¹ J. P. Morray, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

² G. Ya. Tarle, *Druzya strany Sovetov* (Friends of the Land of Soviets), Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1968, p. 348.

waifs. We had been told in Petrograd not to attract the attention of the beggars. But that was impossible. We moved very slowly because the railroads were not in very good condition, and had our meals when we stopped. We were always surrounded by hungry people."

Anna said some members of the group at that point were already disgusted by the conditions; they had not really taken seriously the warnings about the difficult conditions in the papers they had signed. Ruth Kennell of Palo Alto, California, was one of the Americans who took all the hardships in stride. She even befriended a waif she met at one of the stations and took him to Kemerovo with her and her husband. Later she wrote *Comrade One Crutch*, a novel based on those events.

In January 1923, after being in Kemerovo for nearly six months, Anna wrote a letter describing her first impressions and her life to friends in Pursglove, West Virginia. The letter was printed in the *Kuzbas Bulletin* (published regularly by the project recruiters in New York) on April 1, 1923:

"We haven't heard yet whether you received my last letter. We are all happy and well and hope that you are the same and that you have had a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We had a New Year's party here and had a good time.

"I go to the Russian school every day and can write and read in Russian. I cannot speak very much Russian yet, but the Colony is holding night classes to teach everyone the language. Papa is teaching me how to sing in Russian. It is not so cold here as some people suggest. The coldest we have had is 38° below zero. Even if it does get a little cold it does not stay cold long. The snow is about three or four feet deep. The air is healthy and pleasant. And the Spring will be here before we are aware of it.

"The land is very fertile, and you can get as much land as you can work. They give you the seeds and you repay them with seeds on the basis of a percentage of what you raise. There are many different kinds of plants here.

"Food is plentiful, although we are a little short of sugar. There is, however, some on the way here.

"There are two sawmills, two theaters, five mines, a chemical plant, three bath houses besides those at the mines, two machine shops, a carpenter shop, a tin shop, a tailor shop, a shoemaker shop, a baker and two electrical stations. We have electricity in the houses, and you can use it for anything if you have the irons.

"In Summer it is warm and beautiful. We go swimming, fishing, boating and hunting. In Winter we are sleighing, skating, etc. Bring your skates when you come.

"The miners work six hours, and sometimes more, the outside workers work eight hours. The women also work several hours daily, but mostly in the kitchen and the dining room. When the miners come in the Spring they should bring strong, warm clothing, with good strong work shoes.

"At the end of three years we expect to produce not less than 2,000,000 tons of coal a year. The Americans have already increased the coal production several times. The chemical plant in about nine months will be working full speed.

"Best wishes to you, hoping to see you in the Spring."

The colony was not all work and no play. The Americans and local people (mostly Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians and Tatars) became friendly from the start and participated in many activities together.

A favorite gathering place for both the colonists and the locals was the library Ruth Kennell ran. The books had been donated to the project in the United States. They were fiction and non-fiction for adults and children, many of them being classics of American literature. Ruth also kept a good supply of paper and crayons there so youngsters could come and draw.

Dr. Krivosheeva explained: "The old-timers who remember the colony say that the American colonists enjoyed our dances and songs, and they liked our celebrations." Vladimir Sukhatsky, a radio reporter in Kemerovo, who interviewed me while I was there, said his parents lived next door to some American colonists who would invite his family over on Halloween, Thanksgiving and other American holidays and come to his house on Soviet holidays.

Krivosheeva also talked about the joint sports activities and games they played. "Many of the Americans," she pointed out, "came from states where there was no snow, so they learned how to ski here. Times were hard, so they made their own skis." A favorite game for both the colonists and locals was a Russian version of skittles called *gorodki*. The Americans first wanted to play American skittles. This quickly bored the locals, so they suggested playing *gorodki* instead. The pieces are diverse and have many different names; although the Americans still didn't know any Russian, they learned the names of all the pieces.

Another joint activity was farming. The Americans set up a large farm where they planted fruits and vegetables and kept livestock. "This also brought the local people and the Americans together," commented Krivosheeva, and then added, "Eugene Preikshas, Anna's brother, said that when his father started building his own house and planting trees many of the Siberians came over to help out. They did a lot of work together."

An article entitled "Americans in Siberia," printed in the local newspaper *Kuzbass* on August 5, 1922 (while Anna was on her way to Kemerovo) shows what some of the first impressions were of the American colonists. The new farming techniques to which the Siberians were introduced evoked many comments:

"The people of Kemerovo feel very friendly to the American workers. A closer relationship is hindered by lack of knowledge of the language.

"The Americans who have worked under capitalist discipline have had a good impression of the work done by the Russians. One of the American workers who went to Novonikolaevsk [now Novosibirsk.—P. G.] from Kuzbas has commented, 'We were surprised by the abilities of the Russian worker, not to mention his great capacity for work.'

"The first group of Americans brought a large tractor with them. At the suggestion of the local land committee, the Americans willingly agreed to demonstrate how the tractor can plough. The tractor driver drove his machine without a horse through the market place creating a great deal of curiosity among the peasants there, but only a few adult peasants followed the tractor to the fields; the rest remained at their stands.

"While preparations were being made at the fields to begin ploughing, messages were sent by the land committee to villages in the vicinity inviting the peasants to watch how the tractor ploughed. Only the young people responded; the adults did not believe the news about a tractor and stayed home.

"After a small problem because the tractor driver only spoke English, the tractor ploughed up the field and the good job caused much excitement among those watching. A lively discussion ensued about the depth of the furrows, the efficiency of the tractor and how it helped with the weeding. Peasants who were going down the road hurried to watch the tractor operate.

"An interesting incident occurred when one of the passersby jumped off his cart, rushed over to the tractor and began feel-

ing the furrows the tractor had just made. The peasant apparently wanted to be sure he was not seeing things. The village boys ran home, told the adults what they had just seen, and the adults came running to see the machine work: some walked in groups, others came on horseback and in carts."

Not only Americans joined the colony. Workers and engineers came from Holland, Belgium, Germany and Finland. The Russians, however, drew closest to the American colonists. The official name of the project was the Autonomous Industrial Colony, but the people and even official documents called it the American Industrial Colony. To this day the average person in Kemerovo refers to Project Kuzbas as the American colony.

The colony members also held their meetings together with the local people. Especially in the early months, when serious policy and organizational problems had to be thrashed out, the meetings could get quite hot. The first director of the project, Jack H. Beyer, a Seminole Indian who had belonged to the International Workers of the World (I.W.W.) in the U.S., died of a heart attack at the age of sixty-four in the middle of one of those meetings on October 4, 1922. No doubt the first Native American to become an industrial manager, he lies buried in Siberia.

The colony's director for most of its existence was Sebald J. Rutgers, who put a stop to the endless meetings and bickering over petty daily problems. To the displeasure of many of the workers, who believed every single matter should be decided by the collective, Rutgers began making decisions himself and insisted that they be followed without question. Fortunately for the colony, he made the right decisions. He became so well respected that by the time he asked to leave in 1925 no one wanted to see him go. He was strict but fair and, most importantly, an excellent manager.

Americans have always associated Siberia with cold, but the summer months are quite hot. The colony children would swim in the river and enjoy the hot weather. However, they swam only with the Russians because their parents felt it safer since the local children knew all about swimming in the River Tom.

The adults spent a lot of time at the river, too. Tom Barker, for instance, was inspired there to write the following comments, which were printed in *The New Masses* magazine on November 26, 1921:

HELL IN SIBERIA

"When God made the River Tom in that neck of the woods called Siberia he planted an island with sand and bushes and all right close to where Kuzbas now digs at his seams of coal.

"Siberian summers, thank God, are as hot as the place where the bad folks go, and so the Kuzbas workers, when the whistle blows, 'knock off' four times a day, beat it for the Tom and swim across to the island.

"Sundays it is like Rockaway there. The whole crowd is splashing up the water: Mom, Pop and the kids, the coal digger and the white collar manager, and—would you believe it—there are a few bathing suits.

"Most of the swimmers are *nude*.

"I lay under the shade of a bush one Sunday digesting three hard boiled eggs and wondered what God thought of it all.

"The sun went down and my stomach and mind turned to solemn things. So many nude swimmers. What a chance for the Watch and Ward Society of America!

"The grandest opportunity ever offered an American Puritan and not a single one around.

"Here's a town I'm telling you where ninety per cent of the population could be put in jail for obscenity and the smut hounds so far away.

"The night came. I digested the eggs and shed a tear for America. Then I stripped everything for a last obscene dip in the obscene River Tom. Oh God, not an American around, and I nude and everyone else nude as Adam and Eve. Yes, Sir it was just hell."

Just as soon as Anna turned fourteen she joined the Young Communist League. Among other things, the Y.C.L. taught Anna how to shoot a gun. She and other Y.C.L.ers used to stand guard at night at important sites to watch for prowlers, usually counter-revolutionaries from the remnants of Kolchak's¹ units. By that time the counter-revolutionaries were not a big problem, just an occasional nuisance to be prevented.

Anna received her first salary at the age of fifteen, when she began to work on the staff of the district Y.C.L. committee.

¹ A "contra" force in Siberia which President Wilson had equipped with hundreds of thousands of rifles and other arms and which was accompanied by U.S. Army regiments that landed in Vladivostok.

That same year, having been selected by the Y.C.L., she enrolled in the Tomsk primary teachers' college. She did not need to take entrance exams because of an affirmative action program in effect then which gave people whose native language was not Russian the opportunity to obtain a higher education (tuition-free, as it is for everyone in the country) and perfect their Russian in the process. (Affirmative action was a Soviet invention).

It was in Tomsk where Anna met her first husband. He was a Russian student attending special college preparatory courses for workers. Although their son was less than a year old when they each graduated, they divorced and parted ways when Anna learned her husband was unfaithful. She went back to Kemerovo with her child and he went to Moscow to attend medical school. She had no contact with him since that time.

While Anna was still studying in Tomsk, the Kuzbas colony broke up. Rutgers was no longer able to handle the job as director due to his failing health. A Russian engineer, Korobkin, took control in 1926 and reorganized the whole operation against the wishes of the colony members.

By 1927 the Americans were completely fed up with the situation and nearly all left in protest against Korobkin's policies. It was this action that finally caused the Soviet authorities to conduct a serious investigation of the complaints against the new manager. As a result, Korobkin was removed from his post, expelled from the Communist Party and tried for embezzlement in a court of law. In 1928 he was sentenced to a prison term of eight years.

In the meantime the colony ceased to exist as it was originally founded. In 1927 it merged into the Supreme Economic Council, and all but around twenty-five families, Anna's included, left Kemerovo. Some returned to the United States, while others went to work on construction projects in other parts of the Soviet Union—Kuznetsk, Nizhny Novgorod (now Gorky), Kharkov, the Turkestan-Siberian Railway—or to farms set up by Americans in the Northern Caucasus.

Alfred Pearson, Jr., a Consulting Engineer from Toledo, Ohio, was the top engineer in Kuzbas. A leading mining specialist, he had been lured to Siberia by the attractive salary offered by Rutgers. Pearson was first skeptical that anything would come of the project in the rundown mines of Siberia, but in the end he praised the adventure. With his help the increase in daily output

per man in the Kuznetsk mines went from one-tenth of a ton to more than one ton. An article entitled "Russian Industry Is Making Advances, Says American Engineer," and published in the *Kuzbas Bulletin* reflected Pearson's views on the subject.

In his book about the colony, J. P. Morray describes the project's political achievements this way:

"There had been many disappointments and a substantial reduction in the magnitude of the project as compared to the proposals of 1921. To none of the founders was it given wholly to say, 'I have lived my dream'. Nevertheless, it still stands as an inspiring example of American-Soviet friendship and cooperation despite many obstacles. As such, it deserves to be more widely known, to be cherished and celebrated in our own perilous times."¹

When the majority of the American colonists either returned to the United States or moved to other cities and industrial projects, the Preikshas' did not hesitate in their decision to stay. Anna explained: "First of all we had left the United States forever. We did not want to return because of the persecution we felt we would face as Communists. My father was well respected where he worked in Kemerovo and was an elected member of the city Soviet (city council). My mother was an elected member of the district (neighborhood) Soviet. My father had done so much already in the mine that he could not leave it. I was attending college and my elder brother was at the vocational school for chemical technicians in Kemerovo. We were satisfied."

John Preikshas was so concerned about the operation that to save the mine money he performed several jobs—electrician, fitter, etc. He would leave early in the morning and come home late at night. His wife told him, "Take your bed and sleep there. Why should you bother coming home?" John would walk three miles to and from work instead of riding the horse and carriage he was allotted as a manager. He responded to his wife's scoldings by saying, "Let the carriage be used by the mine messengers. I am still fit enough to walk."

Anna recalled: "Mother sometimes complained. Father had promised that we would build communism in a few years. She had believed him and scolded him. But when she became involved in community affairs, especially with the activities of the

¹ J. P. Morray, *op.cit.*, p. 175.

local women's organization, she forgot about missing the United States. But every once in a while those feelings would burst out in her."

In 1929, when Anna graduated from the Tomsk Teachers' College, she returned to Kemerovo and started teaching the first grade. She worked there for only half a year before going back to full-time Y.C.L. work.

Then came another turning point in Anna's career. When asked to be an interpreter for a visiting American from Moscow, she realized that lack of practice was causing her to forget her English, especially after four years at college where she spoke nothing but Russian. While she was displeased with her performance, one of her fellow Y.C.L. leaders was impressed and suggested she consider using her knowledge of English as a career. "I felt I could do something important that way," she reminisced. "There were so few people then who knew English in our country. I accepted his suggestion to go to Novosibirsk to be an interpreter."

In 1930 Anna turned twenty, became a Soviet citizen along with the rest of her family, and married a second time. Her new husband had come from Moscow to work at Kuzbasugol and fell in love with this bright and energetic young woman so deeply committed to the ideals of socialism. He was attracted by her spark and she, in turn, found in him assuring qualities that brought her peace of mind in the knowledge that her son had a father. He also was a great comfort to her when their first child, a daughter, died of pneumonia at the age of nine months.

In 1934 another daughter was born, and for a little over two years Anna's life was in order, only to be shattered by forces unforeseen and uncontrollable. In 1937, during the Stalin purges, Anna's father, brother and husband were arrested as "enemies of the people." She and her mother would be expelled from the Communist Party for being the wives of "enemies." They would wait for their menfolk for ten years in vain, hoping against hope that some terrible mistake had been made. At that time Anna did not know what would become clearer only two decades later and what I will attempt to explain in the next chapter.

* * *

When the Preikshas family was settling down in Kemerovo in 1922 thousands of other Americans and Canadians had either

already arrived in Soviet Russia, or were on their way. After researching articles in the Soviet press and archival documents of the Soviet government of that period, Dr. Galina Tarle, a Soviet historian on immigration from the United States and Canada to the Soviet Union in the early 1920s, estimated that between 1920 and 1925 Soviet Russia accepted about 22,000 people in organized groups of immigrants and as individuals. In that same period the Permanent Commission on Immigration under the Council of Labor and Defense received applications for group immigration from nearly half a million people from Western Europe and the United States, most of them coming from the USA.

The groups these people were joining were organized by the Society for Technical Aid to Soviet Russia, based in the U.S. and Canada. The organization was founded in New York in May 1919, by a group of engineers, technicians and skilled workers.

Friends of Soviet Russia, established on August 9, 1921, was the second largest organization sending people to work in Soviet Russia. A non-Communist organization of American workers friendly to the Soviet people and government, by the end of 1921 it had 140 branches in major cities of the U.S. and Canada. Its program called for diplomatic relations, trade, and accurate information in the media about Soviet Russia.

However, other organizations also participated in the campaign to help Soviet Russia. For instance, at the end of 1920 the Chicago branch of the International Mechanics' Union passed a resolution to send skilled mechanics to Soviet Russia. Unions of electricians, seamstresses and people in other trades were also involved in these efforts.

Among the earliest organized groups of workers to arrive in Soviet Russia (May 1921) was a cooperative of around 120 seamstresses and tailors from the United States. The cooperative was given facilities in Moscow where they could operate the sewing machines they had brought with them. It was called Factory No. 36 and was opened officially on November 13, 1921.

In early 1921 there were already several groups of agricultural workers from the United States in Soviet Russia. They brought with them 12,000 dollars worth of the latest American agricultural machinery. Another important group at that time was comprised of auto mechanics who had worked at Ford plants and other large American enterprises. In the middle of May 1921, 123 workers and engineers from the United States came to

work at the plant run by the Moscow Automobile Society (now the Likhachev Auto Plant in Moscow). Arthur Adams, a Canadian engineer, was made plant director.

In April 1921, 25 highly skilled electricians arrived in Moscow from the United States and were handed over a plant that became known as the First Russian-American Electromechanical Plant. The Americans renovated the facilities and equipment and soon began repairing electrical motors there.

Dr. Tarle has concluded that having highly skilled foreign workers involved in the Soviet economy, workers with experience in large industries, significantly helped revitalize Russia's economy by 1926. Success was largely due to greater labor productivity. "The production collectives of foreign workers were merely separate 'islands' of high technology and advanced production methods. . . . However, the number of these 'islands' was not what was so significant, but the role they played as model enterprises."¹

Dr. Tarle explained that the subsequent history of immigrant industrial enterprises and agricultural communes confirmed their practical value. For instance, the Autonomous Industrial Colony in Kuzbas became the center of a major coal and metallurgical base. . . . The Moscow Automobile Society and the Russian-American Instrument Plant² were the predecessors of giants of Soviet industry. "Even the most scanty data on the future activities of some of the agricultural collectives," wrote Tarle, "indicates that in the second half of the 1920s and the 1930s, having merged with the national network of Soviet agricultural enterprises, they continued to be outstanding."³

Tarle went on to point out that the machinery, tools, high quality seeds and other goods brought by the foreign workers to Soviet Russia were not only valuable in themselves but also because of the tremendous moral support they represented.

A pamphlet published in 1930 about one of the most successful immigrant agricultural communes called *Seyatel* (Sower) described the relations between the North American newcomers (many of Finnish origin) and the local peasantry this way:

"The *Seyatel* Commune is not isolated from the local peasantry but maintains constant ties. The local peasants, including those

¹ G. Ya. Tarle, *op. cit.*, p. 353.

² Moscow Instrument Plant.

³ G. Ya. Tarle, *op. cit.*, p. 353.

from more distant areas, very often visit the commune, get advice there, especially about using machinery in the fields. And the commune workers gladly tell the peasants about life in America and about why they came to the Soviet Union."¹

However, first reactions to the foreign specialists were not always positive. Anna Preikshas explained that the peasants did not trust the foreigners at first: "The foreigners were well dressed and regarded as wealthy people. After many centuries of exploitation and oppression by the well-to-do peasants (*kulaks*) and landlords, the peasants were worried about having new oppressors. Probably not understanding the foreign languages they heard spoken by the newcomers was also frightening."

Referring to the seventeen foreign agricultural communes spread across the country, a report made in August 1925 by the immigrant commission under the Council of Labor and Defense stated: "Nearly everywhere the local peasantry was at first skeptical about the commune settlements, but when they saw the success of the communes and the newcomers' good attitude toward the peasantry, the local people changed their opinions radically and began paying close attention to the way the commune members were using machinery and other methods to intensify production, they began asking for advice and assistance and adopting the new techniques on their own farms."²

The learning experience worked both ways. Harold Ware, an American farm expert, went to Soviet Russia in the summer of 1922 with a few other farmers and twenty-two tractors to set up a model farm. He was allotted land in Perm, on the western slope of the Urals. In October 1922 he wrote an article in *Pravda* about his experiences:

"...We came to teach, but we ended up learning more. We know that Russia has enough strength and patience to cope with its tasks and difficulties that can be summed up in one word—restoration. Our American workers' organizations that want to help Russia restore its agriculture should be better informed about Russian conditions and needs."

¹ P. Ya. Tadeush, *Amerikanskaya kommuna Seyatel* (The American Commune *Seyatel*), Moscow-Leningrad, 1930, p. 90.

² *Delo trudyashchikhsya vsekh stran* (The Cause of the Working People of All Countries), Moscow, 1957, pp. 214-15.

Chapter Two

ESCAPING THE GREAT DEPRESSION

With the economy restored by the late 1920s, it was time to plan ahead for the nation's industrialization. Building up the lumber industry was a part of the first five-year plan launched in 1929. Lumber was necessary as a major export commodity, bringing in the hard currency required to import much needed machinery to build heavy industry. The autonomous republic of Karelia bordering on Finland in the northwestern part of the Soviet Union had huge forests and was in a prime location to export lumber by water. Consequently, this otherwise undeveloped region was of great importance in the first five-year plan. The problem was that the local work force was too small and unskilled to reach the targets without outside assistance.

The Finnish leaders of Soviet Karelia, Edvard Gylling and Kustaa Rovio, looked to the United States and Canada to help expand the labor force and attract North American lumber technology, the most advanced in the world at that time. Gylling and Rovio knew that many of the North American loggers spoke Finnish and would be willing to help out the Soviet Union.

Recruiting was done through a new organization called Soviet Karelian Technical Assistance that was set up in the United States. The main drive was to sign up loggers, skilled fishermen and skilled workers in other trades. The first group of North American Finns came to Karelia in 1930; the last in 1935. Between 5,000 and 10,000 Finns from the U.S. and Canada moved to Karelia in the 1930s.

The Great Depression left many people unemployed or fearing unemployment, so recruiting was not difficult. Most of these Finns came from Michigan, Minnesota and Ontario. However, those who went to Soviet Karelia were not among the most destitute. On the contrary, they had comfortable homes and enough money to pay their own way, and many donated assets to help buy machinery and brought their own equipment, too. Usually whole families emigrated, many of them possessing U.S. or Canadian passports.

The most useful equipment brought by the immigrants for Karelia's lumber industry were the Canadian model portable frame saw, Canadian axe for logging, and the Canadian double sled pulled by a team of horses or a tractor. The experience the North American Finns brought with them was also invaluable. They taught hundreds of other workers their methods of organizing work, clearing roads, techniques for loading and how to use hand-held equipment to facilitate work.

While it is hard to say precisely what the practical results were of the work done by the immigrants, it is a fact that the productivity of the area's lumber industry grew appreciably in that period. The new technology brought by the American and Canadian Finns was a significant factor.

* * *

Many of those immigrants still live in Karelia, as well as in other parts of the Soviet Union, including Moscow. I learned about their history through several of them I have known well for many years. While many have Finnish names, they seem to me to be more like Americans or Canadians since their formative years were spent in North America.

Aini Lehto was born on a farm in Rock, Michigan, in 1914 to Finnish immigrant parents. Her mother was a housewife and her father a woodworker. The farm was small, as was the house where a kitchen and three rooms were shared by Aini's parents and nine brothers and sisters. Like the other children in the local Finnish-American community, Aini went to cultural events at Finn Hall.

After finishing eight years of school, Aini spent another two years in a business college in Chicago. There she learned various secretarial skills, including typing and stenography. Her first job was as a stenographer at a radio store. However, hit by the Great Depression, the store closed down and Aini was out of a job with no prospects for soon finding another one.

It was at that time that lecturers began coming to Finn Hall to speak about the efforts to build up Soviet Karelia and urge members to participate in the endeavor to turn the wilderness of Karelia into a modern industrial republic. These people, many of whom had previously visited the Soviet Union, did not try to delude the possible recruits with promises of an easy life.

Aini's older brother was convinced by the recruiters to move to Karelia in 1930. He wrote home that he was working at a logging camp outside Petrozavodsk, the capital, and advised the family to join him. In explaining the family's final decision to migrate to Karelia, Aini recalled: "Father felt that in the Soviet Union the children would have more opportunities to work and make a way for themselves in life. There was no hope for us in the USA."

When Aini arrived in Soviet Karelia with her family in the winter of 1931, the seventeen-year-old was surprised that it was colder than her home state of Michigan. The food supply, however, was better than she had been led to expect. The lecturers had cautioned that only children could get milk in the Soviet Union. She found this and other warnings to be exaggerations, although certainly the food supplies were not nearly as abundant as they had been in the United States. Special stores stocked with food that was in short supply were set up to accommodate the North American Finns so the transition to a more spartan way of life would be somewhat easier. By 1935, however, these stores were done away with and food supplies were the same for the whole population.

Like the other newcomers, Aini's family lived in a special dormitory for immigrants for a few months before they were assigned apartments. The hardships in those early years when Karelia was being developed were undeniable, but looking back on them and the whole process of settling in the Soviet Union, Aini explained that she has always adapted to every situation in her life quite well. "I guess it's something in my nature," she surmised.

It did help, of course, that Aini found the people in her adopted homeland similar to those she had left behind in the United States. She told me she felt that "both peoples are big-hearted and outgoing; both live in large countries with space to breath and are used to having diverse ethnic groups."

Aini's first job was as a Finnish-language typist at the regional Party committee. After working there for four years, Aini was hired as a typist for a Finnish newspaper, the *Punainen Karjala*. There she also learned to type Karelian, using the Russian alphabet. Later when the decision was made to bring out the paper in Karelian instead of Finnish, she remained on the job.

Although Aini did not wish to stay at the paper when all her



American Kuzbas colonists posing at a picnic during a Siberian summer in 1923

Soviet and American workers in Kemerovo, Siberia, in 1923





Anna Preikshas (sitting in wicker chair in middle) with her university English students in Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine, in 1949



Anna Preikshas (left), her parents and brothers in Thomas, West Virginia, in 1921



Anna Preikshas (right) in Kemerovo with another member of the colony of American workers in 1924



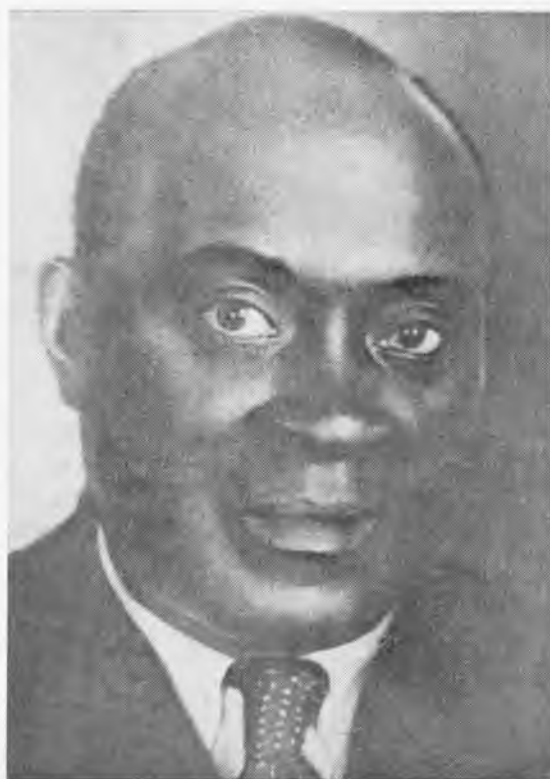
Aini Lehto from Rock, Minnesota, a Red Army private during World War II



Hank Siren (top left) and his step brother Elmer Kari, from Wright, Minnesota (top right) with their wives and children in Alma Ata in 1954



Bertha Byalek (New York) and Oliver John Golden (Mississippi) opted to remain in Soviet Central Asia where they were working on a two-year contract in the early 1930s. Their reason—they did not experience the social pressures of an interracial marriage as they had in New York



coworkers and friends had been laid off because they could not type and edit using the Russian alphabet, she was persuaded to remain. After making her decision she put all her energy into teaching the newly-hired Karelian women to touch type. By 1939 she was the supervisor of four typists.

In the meantime Aini had married an immigrant from Finland and they had a small daughter. By the start of the war of 1939-1940 with Finland, however, Aini's husband had died, leaving her the sole support of herself and her daughter. Her brother and sisters had their own families to care for and her father had died of tuberculosis.

This was Aini's situation when the former assistant editor of the Karelian newspaper asked her to be a typist for the political department of the army where he was stationed. Although she was an immigrant, she was offered work in a sensitive part of the army. At first she hesitated, but the newspaper editor turned army officer was not daunted by her reservations and convinced her to apply for the job. Two days later she began her army career.

Hank Siren, his half brother Elmer Kari, mother and stepfather (Kari) were among the Finnish-Americans who set off for Karelia in 1931 from Minnesota. Hank had always wanted to be an auto mechanic, so he did a lot of reading on the subject and learned whatever he could. In 1930, at the age of eighteen, he saw that no job was forthcoming.

When the recruiters came around to their Finn Hall, Hank's family signed up. No steady jobs were available, and their small farm was soon to be auctioned off because they could not pay their debts. The prospect of going to Karelia, despite the hardships they were told they would face, was about the only hope the family had at that time to keep body and soul together. The only one to stay behind was an older brother, a seaman.

Hank Siren was nineteen years old in 1931 when he arrived in Karelia with his stepfather and mother, and seven-year-old half brother, Elmer Kari. Hank was a newcomer who was not troubled at all by the physical hardships of living in undeveloped Karelia. He explained: "We had a real hard time of it in the USA, what with the constant fear of losing our Minnesota farm and the family's hand-to-mouth existence. The housing conditions and food shortages in Karelia were no worse, and anyway they were soon over."

Hank's case supports the dictum that everything is relative. While most of the Americans who came to Karelia in the 1930s had a moderate living standard in the United States, some, such as Hank's family, did not.

Though Hank's stepfather found the hardships familiar, he expected improvements. Perhaps for that reason he wasted no time thinking things over and applied within two months for Soviet citizenship for his family. Mr. Kari had come to stay.

Hank was hired at once in an auto repair shop in Petrozavodsk. Mr. Kari worked in a paper mill as a fitter. He was soon

promoted to team leader because of his abilities. Mrs. Kari, like many American women in those days, stayed home to keep house. Little Elmer, with just the first grade behind him in the United States, went off to school.

Because Hank, Elmer and their parents felt optimistic about their future in Karelia from the outset and were not the least bit interested in returning to the United States, within a matter of months they felt quite at home in Karelia. In part this was due to the generosity of the people, especially the Russian teachers who stayed after classes to give extra help in Russian to the North American students. Hank does not remember many people returning to the U.S. and Canada. When I asked him what happened to the thousands of North American immigrants (few of whom are still living in Karelia), he said the war scattered them all over the country because Karelia was occupied by Finland and the Nazis, and many were killed during the war, especially the men who fought at the front.

Like the other young people who had come from the United States, Hank spent a lot of time at their club where he met Pansy Valley. In 1936 they were married and by the beginning of the war they had two children. An old family picture from those days shows a handsome blond couple who looked perfectly matched.

However, the storybook romance had a sad ending. Recalled Hank : "We knew in 1939 that war was coming. We all hoped we were wrong, but we sensed something terrible was going to happen."

Bertha Byalek, born in 1905, was the daughter of a successful landlord in New York. Many of her father's apartment houses were in poor neighborhoods, including Harlem. However, Bertha remembers her father as a soft-hearted man who never evicted tenants who could not pay their rent. Despite this potentially fatal personality trait in a businessman, he was a wealthy man.

At the age of seventeen, Bertha, influenced by one of her brothers, joined the Communist Party U.S.A. in the early 1920s. As a Communist she felt she should be among workers so she got herself a factory job in the day and attended college in the evening.

It was around this time that Bertha met and fell in love with another Communist Party member, Oliver John Golden. Born in 1892, Oliver had for many years worked on the Mississippi cotton plantation where his father had once been a slave. He had fled home with the Ku Klux Klan on his heels because of a fight with the plantation owner's son. Settling in Tuskegee, Alabama, he entered Tuskegee Institute for Blacks. No white college or university in the South, and very few in the North, would admit any Blacks. Unfortunately, after quarreling with a white official, he was arrested and expelled from the institute. From there he moved to New York and got a job on the railway as a porter.

Oliver joined the Pullman Porters' Union, the only one in the United States at that time that accepted Blacks. There he met another union member, one of the very few whites who was working at a "Black job." This man was to change the whole course of Oliver's life by the simple gesture of a handshake; it was the first time a white man ever offered to shake Oliver's hand. That white man also happened to be a Communist. Along with that casual handshake, he offered Oliver a whole new world of ideas and introduced the young Black man to the Communist Party, which led to his marriage to Bertha Byalek.

When Bertha's parents found out about the romance they threw her out of the house, and her non-Communist friends refused to have anything to do with her. "You can imagine," she

said, "a white woman and a Black man falling in love in the 1920s; it was unheard of. I didn't know of a single other case."

Before meeting Bertha, Oliver had travelled to Soviet Russia as a Communist Party representative in 1924-25 and 1926-27. He attended courses in Marxism which were being offered to people mainly from Asia and Africa but also Blacks from the United States. The students were given an opportunity to work on collective farms, in factories or, as in Oliver's case, as streetcar drivers. Oliver learned much about Soviet Russia on his trips, and he eagerly shared his impressions with others upon his return.

One Black man who had heard Oliver Golden speak before a large crowd in Harlem happened to meet his daughter, Lily, in Moscow in the 1960s. He first asked permission to shake Lily's hand, because he could never forget the rousing speech he had heard her father make in Harlem in 1927. He told Lily that Oliver said he had been happy in Soviet Russia, that there he had been treated with dignity for the first time in his life. The man, remembering this speech in Harlem so many decades later, told Lily that Oliver had been so articulate, sincere and witty that he felt self-conscious about going up to the speaker afterwards. "At least now I have the chance to meet Oliver Golden's daughter," said the man in parting.

It was this charisma of Oliver that also eventually won over even Bertha's biased, non-Communist friends. However, Bertha's family, except for one cousin, turned against her completely. This was when she began living with Oliver in Harlem and eventually decided to marry him.

People invariably stared at the couple with shock, contempt and hostility. Once Oliver and Bertha wanted to see a Black theater performance outside of Harlem. When Oliver went to buy tickets he was told the show was sold out. When Bertha went for the tickets she was offered two orchestra seats. "As soon as we sat down," recalled Bertha, "all the people in the seats around us got up and left the theater."

An idea that was to change their lives came to Oliver after his 1927 trip to Soviet Russia where he saw how many people from the United States were working on various agricultural and industrial projects in the U.S.S.R. Oliver's plan was to organize a group of Black Americans to undertake some useful project in Soviet Russia to help one of the non-white ethnic groups that had been oppressed in tsarist times.

Bertha was all for the idea, so, working through Amtorg¹, they went about recruiting others to sign a three-year contract and go with them. The very first to join up was George Tynes, a graduate of Tuskegee Institute and a nationally known football player. Altogether sixteen Black families, including specialists in subtropical agriculture, were on the boat to Soviet Russia in 1931.

Bertha gave up her entire inheritance (her father had died, leaving her a sizable fortune), and refused to pack any of her expensive furs and jewels. As she explained to me, "I was going to a country where the people were struggling to make a new life, where they had none of these luxuries I was used to; so I had no right taking such things with me."

On November 7, 1931 (the fourteenth anniversary of the Russian revolution), their boat arrived in Leningrad. That day they attended public celebrations of the revolution, and the next day they boarded a train headed for Central Asia and the Uzbekistan desert. The group of sixteen Black families lived at the Kaufman Seed-Selection Station and cotton experimental laboratories about forty miles from Tashkent. Oliver was involved in cotton growing, using the latest methods he had learned at Tuskegee. His contribution to cotton growing in Uzbekistan in those early years was largely responsible for laying the foundation for the republic's highly successful cotton industry today. He also did much to develop the system of irrigation.

Another member of the group, George Tynes, who died in Moscow in 1981, was in charge of raising ducks and fish. The group also included agricultural chemists, graduates of Tuskegee or Hampton, others from northern colleges, and some just ordinary cotton farmers from the South. Some tested the quality of seeds and the strength of cotton fibers, and some worked in the fields.

A year after these Black people had settled in Uzbekistan they were visited by the talented Black poet and prose writer Langston Hughes. Learning that Hughes was in Tashkent, they invited him to spend Christmas on the farm. By that time Hughes had had just about all the travelling he could take on the still undeveloped railroads and roads of the new Soviet republic. In *I Wonder as I Wander*, he discussed at great length the discomforts of travelling in crowded trains and making transfers through

¹ A Soviet trade agency in the United States that engaged in U.S.-Soviet trade and arranged for U.S. experts to work in the Soviet Union on contract.

ankle-deep mud. At the end of that trying journey, he wrote about his unusual Christmas with Black Americans in Uzbekistan:

"Christmas Eve in Uzbekistan—and I was miserable! But inside Golden's neat white-painted cottage, it was jolly and warm... Laughing and joking, folks were getting in the mood for Christmas. Every so often someone poured me another drink, and left me in the corner with my thoughts. But after a supper of stewed rabbit, hot bread and buttered squash, I felt better. And when midnight came and it was Christmas, in spite of the fact that I could never carry a tune, I sang 'Silent Night' with the others.

"Christmas Day was wonderful. We even had a pumpkin pie for dessert, and the tables were loaded down with all the American-style dishes that those clever Negro wives could concoct away over there in Uzbekistan. That morning I didn't feel homesick at all when I got up and found a stocking full of halva, cashew and pistachio nuts hanging on the head of my bed. They were delightfully amiable hosts, these cotton-collective Negroes from America in the middle of a mud-cake oasis frosted with snow."¹

When the three-year Amtorg contract was up, some returned to the United States and some extended it for another three years. Those who remained in the Soviet Union moved from the desert to Tashkent, the capital of the republic. That was in 1934.

In those days Tashkent was essentially a large village with a population of 500,000 and without one tall building. When the Black American workers moved to Tashkent a four-story apartment house was built especially for them since it was felt by the local authorities that the traditional housing was not adequate for such distinguished people.

The Goldens were given a two-bedroom apartment in that building. Meanwhile, in July 1934 their daughter Lily was born. Her birth was the decisive reason why the couple remained in the Soviet Union permanently. Oliver had thought their child would be born fair-skinned, but when he saw she was quite dark at birth, he did not want her to be subjected to the racism he knew the family would face in the United States. He was sure the three of them would have a variety of degrading problems as an interracial family back home, not the least of which would be finding housing.

In the Soviet Union, Oliver already knew from his own ex-

¹ Langston Hughes, *I Wonder as I Wander*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1964, p. 180.

perience that such problems did not exist. Black skin is not unusual for Central Asia, where the local ethnic groups often have dark skin pigment, and any kind of racial discrimination was totally against the fundamental principles of the Soviet government. Thus, Lily was given Soviet citizenship at birth, and her parents were issued Soviet passports a year later.

In Tashkent, Oliver worked for the Institute of Irrigation as a researcher. Oliver was particularly popular from the outset. He was not only active in international affairs but local matters as well. Soon he was elected by the people of Tashkent to serve on the city soviet. One year after Lily was born Bertha went to work as an English teacher at Tashkent University where she remained for the next five years.

By this time the Goldens were feeling quite at home. Oliver was concerned that his daughter—who spoke only English at home with her parents—learn good Russian so she could achieve well in a local Russian school. Oliver's solution was to hire a Russian tutor for Lily. He found a former actress who was willing to be a live-in tutor for the child, but he did not know that she was actually Ukrainian and spoke Russian with a heavy Ukrainian accent. Lily today laughs when she recalls her father's mistake and how she learned rather odd Russian from this kind-hearted woman she called Aunt Nadya, who actually became a member of the family, living with them for nearly thirty years.

Aunt Nadya's role in the family became especially important in 1940 when Oliver died suddenly due to heart trouble. His illness had been complicated by problems with his kidneys, which had been damaged in New York when policemen breaking up a demonstration struck Oliver repeatedly on his sides.

After her husband's death, Bertha could no longer afford their housekeeper and nanny. But Aunt Nadya was so attached to the family that she insisted on staying on without pay. She was a strong-willed woman who felt Bertha could not manage the household without her, and it was she who essentially became head of the household, handling the budget and making all the major family decisions. Bertha became the breadwinner, working day and night as an English teacher and translator.

A year after Bertha's personal tragedy of losing her husband, tragedy befell the whole nation when Nazi Germany invaded the country and occupied the most agriculturally and industrially developed parts of the Soviet Union.

Born in 1916 in Porvoo, Finland, Sally Valley spent most of her childhood and youth in the United States, in Bonhamtown, near New Brunswick, New Jersey. It was a small, peaceful community that left Sally with many pleasant childhood memories.

The first thing she and her sister did to "look American" when they arrived in the U.S. as small girls was cut off their long braids. Then they began speaking English to each other instead of Finnish. What's more, the family anglicized its surname, Laakso, which in Finnish means Valley, so Sally became Sally Valley, a name many people assured her would make her a movie star.

Most of the neighbors were Finnish or Hungarian. At school her best friends were from Iceland, Hungary, Poland, Italy and Lithuania. The school also had many Jewish and Black students. This was where she was first introduced to the customs of other cultures and learned not only tolerance of other peoples, but a deep appreciation for the contribution each one had to offer, both in personal and social relations.

Like the other Finnish-Americans who ended up in the Soviet Union, Sally and her family went to Finn Hall and became involved in radical political activities among the various immigrants. Sally's father, Oiva, was a supporter of the C.P.U.S.A., and the children belonged to the Young Pioneers, a communist-led children's organization of those years. These activities attracted the attention of the F.B.I., which was ultimately one of the main reasons why the family left the United States. Sally explained the political climate in those days: "Immigrant workers were the first to be fired. Immigrants were not bothered by the authorities if they agreed with those conditions and stayed out of radical politics; but if not, they ran into trouble, like my father."

In the meantime, however, Sally's father managed to make a modest living as a floor layer. Still, it was necessary for the

youngsters to contribute to the family income. Sally's brother had a newspaper route, her older sister dropped out of school at the age of sixteen to work, and Sally at fourteen did odd jobs to help support the family.

The financial troubles and F.B.I. harassment were not great enough to keep Sally from having a good social life at school. Singing in the school choir, acting in the drama department, participating in sports events and writing for the school newspaper, she was a popular girl among her classmates when the family packed up and left for the Soviet Union. An old magazine Sally has kept from New Brunswick High School, *The Advocate*, commented about her leaving: "In the spring of this year, Sally Valley, one of the popular members of our class, left this country to make her home in Russia."

Sally only remembered her German teacher—Herr Müller, as the students called him—being hostile to her when she left. He exclaimed: "Why, if I were given a choice of going to the Soviet Union or hell I'd rather go to hell." Sally's polite response was, "Then why don't you?"

When Sally's family departed the United States she was sixteen years old and in her last year of high school (she had skipped three grades). That was the summer of 1932. Immediately upon arriving in the Soviet Union in June of 1932, the Valley family changed its name back to Laakso. In Karelia they did not feel they had to conceal their Finnish origin, as had been the case in the United States.

Sally Laakso was not at all daunted by Karelia's undevelopment. As she explained, "We were told [by recruiters in the U.S.—*P. G.*] we would have to build socialism ourselves; it was not already built for us."

Although Sally had a fairly accurate idea about what to expect of Karelia, she was still in for some surprises. She recalls, for instance, her astonishment at seeing people in church kissing icons and even the deceased at funerals, as is the custom of Russian Orthodox believers. She thought it was a most unsanitary practice, a sure way to transmit germs. She also had thought that no one in a "Communist" country could be religious or want to go to church.

Sally was also surprised at the work habits of their Russian neighbors. Finns—who are among the hardest working people in the world—considered the Russians to be lax. One of the first

words she learned in Russian was *iadno*, which means "it'll do." She uses the word today as a term to describe an easy-going approach at work—the *ladno* attitude which prevents a worker from doing a job to perfection.

Sally was not the only immigrant I have talked to who has noted this lackadaisical attitude toward work. What North Americans found most unusual is that people left their work bench any time they wanted to have a smoke or a chat, and none of the supervisors minded. On the other hand, the 1930s was also the beginning of the front-rank workers (Stakhanovite) movement, in which speed-up initiatives came from ordinary workers in order to boost production both in agriculture and industry. It was a popular, widespread campaign undertaken and joined by the most enthusiastic members of the society who were determined to make the socialist economy work. However, there also must have been enough *ladno* workers, as Sally called them, to be a drag on the economy and to be noticed by people coming from the highly demanding farms and factories of the West.

Sally also said a dampener on the enthusiasm of the newcomers was the lack of vegetables many of them had been used to eating in their former homes and the large amount of black bread in the diet. She said the change of diet gave many immigrants severe cases of diarrhea which sapped their strength.

But there were also new aspects of their lives that made up for the early difficulties. "It was in the Soviet Union that I saw for the first time in my life professional culture—the theater, opera and symphony," recalled Sally. "The only cultural activities my family could afford and had access to in the U.S. were in our workers' clubs, but that was just on an amateur level. Here we had the pleasure of seeing all sorts of wonderful performances."

It was also pleasant for the immigrants, outcast radicals in the United States who always had to be careful how and to whom they expressed their views, to live in a society where their socialist principles put them in the mainstream of society; they could now be perfectly open about their opinions and participate in unions and political organizations without fear of repression.

Sally began attending a Finnish school in Karelia in 1932 in order to obtain her secondary school diploma (she was a year short of receiving her high school diploma in New Jersey). Her older sister was also able to continue her education at that same

school in preparation for college. Both girls received a monthly stipend. Their younger brother went to a Finnish grammar school while their mother kept house and their father found work as a floor layer, using the skills he had learned in the United States.

The early excitement of being in the new society was abruptly interrupted for Sally after two months. Her father was a husky man of forty-one who had been athletic all his life. But he was one of the diarrhea victims and, although weak from the ailment, he chose to keep working and even donated his labor, along with other Finnish immigrants and local citizens, on the sixth day of the week.

It was on one such day that he and some other men rode in a motorboat across Lake Onega to help fell lumber in the woods. When it was time for the ten-man group to make the return trip that evening, a storm broke out over the lake. But the men would not be deterred and set off for home. Oiva's boat capsized in the water but he was a good swimmer and tried to help those who were not. One of the men who could not swim remembers being hoisted into a life preserver by Oiva, who started pulling him to shore. The man in the life preserver lost consciousness and only revived when he was picked up near shore. Oiva and five other Finnish-Americans, however, were nowhere to be seen. A search party went out to rescue them, but none of them were ever found. The waves and strong undercurrents had swallowed them.

When Sally told me that tragic story which happened over fifty years ago her voice was filled with emotion; toward the end she had to pause a moment to pull herself together. The news of her father's sudden death was a devastating blow and inspired a heart-rending essay she wrote that same night when she could not sleep, an essay about what her father had meant to her and how his death was a statement of self-sacrifice, both for the cause of building a socialist Karelia and for another man in trouble. Had Oiva only thought about saving his own life he most likely would have made it to the other side of the lake.

Naturally, when the family's main breadwinner died the Laakos lost a significant part of their income. Sally claims: "It was the social insurance and the educational system that kept my family here. My brother and I, as minors, received a monthly grant from the government as a result of the loss of the family's

breadwinner. Our mother, with debilitating arthritis which worsened after our father's death, drew disability compensation until she died in Moscow in 1946. Relatives in Finland urged us to join them there, but we refused because of the fascist government in power and because we knew, first, we would be dependent on our relatives and, second, we would not be able to go to college. Here we were secure. What we had wasn't so plentiful, but it was assured and we had our self-dignity."

Sally's dream of college finally came true in 1934 when the affirmative action program made it possible for her to attend the Institute of Foreign Languages in Moscow. All the republics had quotas under this program to send their people to colleges and universities, and Karelia was no exception. Sally shared her dormitory room with four other young women who were afforded the same opportunity. "One roommate was a Ukrainian, another was a Jew from Minsk, another was a Gypsy, the first Gypsy in the Soviet Union to go to college, then there was Norma Shickman, an American Jew, and me, a former American Finn." They paid no tuition, and were given stipends for living expenses.

The first few years Sally was in the Soviet Union she kept a diary. At the end of each year she wrote a few words summing up her experiences and feelings. At the end of her first year, 1932, she wrote: "So many things have happened, good and bad, especially concerning Pop. Mom's health is getting worse. Have been going to all kinds of events. I like it here, but sometimes I wish I were back in the U.S." At the end of the second year, 1933, the diary reads: "Everything going along smoothly. Mother getting better. Doing well in my studies, but would want a little more excitement." At the end of the third year, 1934 (her first year of college in Moscow) she writes: "I am having a hard time because of not knowing Russian well."

Sally's daily diary entries certainly show that she had an active social life in Petrozavodsk like most of the youngsters who had come from North America. There was a youth club with some 500 active members and according to her diary, practically every day Sally was busy attending rehearsals and performances of the youth or school drama club, or participating in athletic workouts and tournaments in swimming, diving, basketball, and track and field. She did best in swimming and diving, winning the Karelian republic's championship in those events several years running.

There was also plenty of excitement for her in Moscow. Sally went frequently, sometimes every night to the International Club on Herzen Street where the Moscow medical workers now have their club. In the 1930s the club sponsored dances almost every night. There was also a choir, which Sally joined, and other cultural and sports activities for the many different immigrants who were working or attending college in Moscow.

It was during this period that Sally met her future husband, Vili Bergman, a young man from Finland who was working at the Moscow-based Communist Youth International. They married on August 1, 1936. Like most weddings those days, it was small, as small as a wedding can get: one guest, one bottle of wine, and one gift—a frying pan.

To perfect their Russian, Sally and Vili would read Russian books to each other for oral practice and take dictations for writing practice. To practice each of the languages they knew, they spoke Finnish on the first day of the week, English on the second, Russian on the third, German on the fourth, Swedish on the fifth, and any language they felt like on the sixth and seventh days, which was usually Finnish. Finally they decided Finnish was the best language for them and it is the language they speak at home to this day.

Sally graduated from the German Department of the Institute of Foreign Languages in 1938, and the English Department in 1939. By that time she had already begun teaching and interpreting English, German and Finnish, and continued to do so after graduation. That same year, 1939, their first child, Vilja was born. A son, Leo, was born a year later.

Sally and Vili were fully settled into Soviet society. Content with their work and their family life, they had no thoughts of moving.

Nick Weinstein's parents came to the United States in 1913 from Hungary when he was barely two years old. They settled in Los Angeles where they became involved in the activities of the local Hungarian immigrant community. Although Nick learned Hungarian at home, English was his native language.

He was a good student in all subjects in high school but finally chose engineering as a future career and entered California Institute of Technology in 1929. Looking back, Nick regards his years at Cal Tech as one of the most satisfying periods in his life.

Nick's broad interests and knowledge enabled him to be active in clubs usually open only to Humanities students in other colleges. By the time he left Cal Tech he was writing for the campus newspaper and was head of the drama club. Nick's face is particularly expressive and open. One of his teachers even sarcastically nicknamed him Poker Face. Nick decided to develop his expressive talent by acting in college plays.

Nick's father was an excellent tinsmith and his mother was a seamstress, so the family had enough money to pay Nick's tuition despite the Depression. However, when his father died, Nick had to think more carefully about the future. "When I started at Cal Tech everybody who would graduate from the college was assured a job," recalled Nick. "But by 1932 that wasn't so. In fact I was supposed to graduate in 1933. Very many of my friends couldn't get engineering jobs; they worked in country clubs, gas stations, and so on. The idea of not being able to get work as an engineer when I finished college was an important factor in my decision to go to the Soviet Union."

One reason why Nick even contemplated moving to the Soviet Union was because his father, a socialist, had always talked about their family living in the Soviet Union. With his father gone and no longer able to carry out the plan that Nick said "had always been in the air," as the eldest son he felt he had a responsibility to realize the family dream. "Another factor, probably the main one, was that I got married," said Nick. Now he needed to think

not only about supporting his mother, brother and sister, but his wife Evelyn as well.

Nick's father left the family a sizable sum of money from his group insurance policy. "This money would either be enough to finish Cal Tech, or to take a trip to the Soviet Union with my wife," said Nick. After discussing it seriously with his wife and mother, the decision was made to go to the Soviet Union with Evelyn instead of finishing his senior year at Cal Tech and risking not finding a decent job.

"There was no Soviet Embassy at that time so we went to Amtorg. They said no, they were not taking on any engineers, especially without a diploma; they would only consider engineers with seven or eight years of experience. I said I knew lots of people going to the Soviet Union who didn't fit that category and asked how they had managed. They said very simply that people went as tourists to the Soviet Union and found jobs when they arrived."

There were certain advantages in signing a contract through Amtorg: a portion of one's salary was paid in dollars that could be taken home, workers were assured a place to live, a good job at good pay, and the privilege of shopping at a store where certain food products generally unavailable elsewhere could be bought.

Having no alternative but to buy a tour, Nick and Evelyn went shopping for the cheapest possible package. Visas to the Soviet Union were only issued if the applicant had a round-trip ticket. An Intourist representative suggested a seven-day trip as the best deal, including passage from New York to Moscow and back to Munich.

Although Nick had grown up among socialists, he said he knew relatively little about the Soviet Union when he made this bold decision to travel there instead of finishing college. "I had never even heard of Stalin before," remarked Nick with a smile, showing his amusement at his own former ignorance. "All the pictures I had ever seen from the Soviet Union showed Lenin or Trotsky, as I recall. The amount that I didn't know about the Soviet Union was appalling for an adult, for a person who was almost an engineer"

With a couple of trunks, pre-paid hotel accommodations and meals for a week, and a few extra dollars in their pocket, Nick and Evelyn Weinstein, aged twenty-one and eighteen, arrived in Moscow in August 1932. The couple was advised the first day

they arrived to apply to the People's Commissariat of Labor (Ministry of Labor) to find out what jobs were available. The ministry was on Dzerzhinsky Square, not far from Red Square, and in a building that no longer exists.

Nick recalled what it was like in the 1930s when he showed up on the Soviet Union's doorstep wanting a job: "The Deputy Commissar of Labor, Mikhail Borodin, was sitting in his office with a woman who spoke English; I suppose she was his secretary. There was nobody else around. She wrote out a whole list of places where people were needed. As it turned out, most of these places didn't want to hire me because I didn't have a degree. Also, I needed a job that would provide me with housing, which was a great big minus.

"Finally we arrived at the People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry. The head of the international department there spoke very good New York English; she had apparently lived in the United States before the revolution. She saw we were very young, sympathized with our predicament and said she would send us to another place. There we met a Mr. Abraham who had also come from the United States and spoke just as good English as we did. He said there was a machine-tool plant just starting up that might need me.

"After a long streetcar ride, we finally got to this plant. Mind you, we only had fifteen dollars by that time. We arrived and there was this soldier guarding the place. He asked me something, I figured he wanted my name, so I said Weinstein. He asked me another question and I again replied Weinstein because I thought he was asking the same question. Then he started to laugh. As I found out later, he was asking me why I had come, and from my answer he had concluded I had come for wine. Anyway, they wrote me out a pass.

"In this plant that hadn't been officially opened the chief engineer's name was Babich. I don't know how many years he had lived in New York, probably many, because he also spoke excellent English. He said he'd hire me as a designer, gave me a piece of paper with something written on it and sent me back to Abraham. Abraham said, 'Okay, they're willing to hire you, but I can't make the final arrangements unless you take Soviet citizenship.' Well, Evelyn and I walked over to a corner of the room, looked at each other for about five minutes, went back to Abraham and said okay.

"Abraham brought out some papers and sent us to a place where foreigners were supposed to register. We filled out some papers and were told to take them to Abraham. So we did. Then Abraham filled out some papers and we went back to the registration office. We were going back and forth all day long.

"Finally, our six days in the hotel were up, but not everything had been arranged. We had no place to go, so we went at five o'clock in the evening to Abraham's office. He was writing something when we walked in, and he asked. 'You have no place to go?' We said, 'That's right, we don't.' "

At that point in our conversation I could no longer hide my amazement at the calm way in which Nick talked about what I would have considered a very frightening situation. So I asked him if he had been so cool when all that was happening. He insisted he had been: "I wasn't excited. I was sure that some way everything was going to turn out all right. After all, I was in the Soviet Union." Nick was in a hurry to get back to his story so he stopped me before I could interrupt again with another question and continued: "Abraham said, 'You know my family's at our country cottage. I'll get a car and take you to my home. You'll live there for several days until we make arrangements with the plant.' For a couple of days we still had to go back and forth, but then we got a room in the plant's dormitory, and I began working."

In the dormitory there were a few Hungarian families, an American representative from the Cincinnati Milling Machine Company, who had a large apartment, and the rest were skilled workmen from Germany. The first two floors had apartments while the third and fourth had rooms, a shared kitchen and bathroom facilities on the same floor.

"We had a lot of trouble getting a job for my wife," commented Nick. "She could type English so she finally got a typing job at the International Workers' Relief. We had actually figured things would be more difficult. So it all turned out better than what we had expected. We had folding beds in our trunk just in case we were given a job up in the Arctic where we might have to camp out; we probably would have taken it."

As a Soviet citizen, Nick was required to serve in the army. This he did for four months. During that time, in 1933, Evelyn was having second thoughts about spending the rest of her life in the Soviet Union. When Nick came home Evelyn hit him

with the bad news. She was still in love with him, but she said she wanted to go back to California. It was quite a blow to Nick, and for many months after their separation when he would see a woman on the streets in the distance who reminded him of Evelyn his heart would stop.

Eventually Nick met and fell in love with a young woman named Mary who had come to the Soviet Union from Los Angeles with her family in March 1932. They were married on July 12, 1936. Mary explained her family's motivation for coming to the Soviet Union: "Well, first of all my parents had originally come from Russia, so they were returning home. But when my brother and I were growing up my father wanted us to have an education and people were saying that in the Soviet Union a higher education was free. And there was no unemployment. So he decided to come back."

Mary, like so many of the immigrants of the 1930s, recalls that living conditions presented the greatest difficulty. She remembers many families coming to the Soviet Union from the United States in which the parents were unable to adapt and went home, but the older children were quite happy and chose to stay. "These young people went to college or worked," explained Mary. "They chose to stay because of their convictions."

"Yes, convictions had a lot to do with it," Nick agreed. "They knew there were people in America who would give their right arm to get a college education in the Soviet Union, so how could they just go and give it up." "People were so enthusiastic," added Mary. "We were all very enthusiastic about building socialism. The young people who didn't focus on the hardships so much found it easier to adapt. We all knew life would get better and better."

Mary's biggest problem in the beginning was her stylish California clothing. "In school the others were dressed very poorly," she said. "It was a problem for me to dress inconspicuously; not like now when people want to stand out and be different."

Mary went to a four-year vocational school to become a transformer builder, and worked between 1937 and 1940 as a designer. Meanwhile, Nick was working at the same machine-tool plant. On February 12, 1941, after five enjoyable years of marriage, Mary and Nick had a son they named Michael. In June the Soviet Union was attacked by Germany.

Norma Laivo spent her childhood and teenage years in the city where I went to high school and where I visit my family about every other year—San Francisco. Thus, from the moment we met we were bonded by our common roots in the City by the Bay that we both love.

Norma was born in San Francisco in 1916. Her mother, half Swedish and half Finnish, worked as a maid in homes of the wealthy, and later at the Fairmont Hotel on top of Nob Hill. So to the best of her ability she decorated the interior of their working class home, located in a formerly wealthy neighborhood, in the style of the homes where she had worked. Norma remembers wall pictures of landscapes, open windows letting in lots of light, an artistic decor, a variety of roses and dahlias in their garden.

Polytechnic High School was a prestigious school when Norma attended it but it was closed down recently after deteriorating to become one of the city's worst schools during the 1960s, when I was going to high school, and in the 1970s. Norma dreamed of going to pilot school and flying planes the rest of her life, but when it came to taking the necessary preparatory course at Polytechnic on airplane motors, she was not allowed to enroll because of her sex.

Disappointed but not devastated, Norma chose nursing as a future career. Her mother had collected a large library of books on nursing, because she had wanted to be a nurse herself. As an immigrant, however, she thought she would be discriminated against and chose not to even apply. Being American-born, Norma was sure of her chances and, having read many of her mother's books on the subject, she signed up for the necessary preparatory courses at Polytechnic.

Norma spoke of her schooling, family and social life with great pleasure and nostalgia. She took me all over San Francisco

with her recollections—I could see the elegant Emporium and utilitarian Woolworth's where her mother did most of the family shopping, the ritzy Fairmont Hotel where she often met her mother after work, the lush green of Golden Gate Park and its Panhandle which she visited frequently because they were near her school.

All in all, Norma's memories were of a happy childhood and adolescence in a friendly family, an intellectually stimulating school and a large Finnish community center with a variety of social and political affairs for people of all ages.

In 1932, however, the Great Depression caught up with the Laivos. Norma's father, a tailor, was getting few orders, and her mother was no longer steadily employed. That year her parents sold their house and joined a group of other Americans moving to Soviet Karelia. Did Norma want to go? "Did I want to go?" she repeated my question, then replied, "I was ready to fly to the Soviet Union!" Mr. and Mrs. Laivo and their American-born daughter Norma, then sixteen, were going to make a new start in life.

Like most of the other immigrants from North America in those days, Norma Laivo and her parents arrived in Leningrad. From there they set off for Petrozavodsk. When I asked her about her first impressions she smiled broadly and recalled wistfully: "I was only sixteen years old in 1932. At that age everything is romantic, everything seems very beautiful, very good, very new, and you are ready to experience this and that and all. But for many older people it was not so easy to adjust."

Norma had an acquaintance from San Francisco, a woman in her mid-twenties who lived in one of the logging camps with her husband, a truck driver. The couple were the only people Norma knew of personally who chose to leave Karelia after their two-year contract with Amtorg expired. "Had my friends lived in Petrozavodsk, where life was much easier than in the woods, where there were no conveniences, perhaps it would have been different," added Norma.

Norma's family lived first in a hotel, then in a dormitory with other Americans: "To me it was all the same. I went to school right away, took part in school activities, was an active Y.C.L. member, and so I had plenty of things to keep me busy."

Norma's father was also occupied. Being an excellent tailor, he had good work with good pay. "He was happy," asserted

Norma. "Mother, however, was not overjoyed. Perhaps she was disappointed, but father and daughter were content, so," laughed Norma, "she had to be content, too."

At school in Petrozavodsk, Norma's thoughts returned to flying. There, anyone, girl or boy, could join the local flying club. Then the opportunity arose to enter a new flying school that had been set up through the club. "I passed the medical exam and all the other entrance exams," said Norma. "Being a girl was not a problem, but not knowing Russian well enough was," sighed Norma. "So, I was advised to spend a year studying Russian intensively; then they would take me."

That one year—1938—turned Norma's life upside down. She went to visit relatives in Finland, and they turned her over to the fascist authorities. She was imprisoned along with other Soviet citizens who happened to be in Finland at that time and Finnish Communists.

Impi Vauhkonen is from Sudbury, Canada, where she was born in 1914. Her father was a lumberjack and her mother a housewife. She lived with her parents, three sisters and one brother in a six-room house her father built in the small working class community of Sudbury, where there was a large Finnish-Canadian population.

Impi's childhood and youth were spent comfortably enough. The family had enough food, clothing and a roof over their heads. They lived no better nor worse than their neighbors.

As Impi explained, the Soviet Union was regarded by radical Finns in her community "like a star shining some place. Hard times had hit Canada and, although we had enough to eat and enough clothing, we were sick of life there, sick of the uncertainty of what tomorrow would bring. In the Soviet Union, a workers' state, we thought life would be ideal."

In 1933, when Impi was already a high school graduate and almost nineteen, the whole family joined the Finns from Canada and the United States who wanted to make new homes for themselves in Soviet Karelia. "Everything was strange and different," she recalled. "In Leningrad the language was strange; everybody dressed alike—short black skirts, white blouses and low shoes. It was obvious the women were striving to be plain."

Impi believes one of the main things that helped her adapt to a new life-style was the warmth of the Russian people. She was a shy person and needed people to bring her out. "Russians are more warm," she said, "they're easier to make friends with." What she found particularly interesting was living among people of various nationalities.

The first job Impi had in the Soviet Union was as an accountant for a bookstore in Petrozavodsk. She had always wanted to be a musician, but it had been impossible to study music in Canada. While her family had enough to eat and a comfortable

house, there was no extra money for music lessons. In Petrozavodsk she was able to attend music school for a few years; her dream had finally come true. But when she married a Finnish-American in 1935, Väinö Rintala, she stopped going to school. Väinö was the musician of the family. He had attended the Boston Conservatory of Music and was a fine clarinet and saxophone player. So perhaps marrying such a man was the next best thing to being a musician herself. It would take a while for Impi to find her own place in life.

Born in 1914, Toini Rodkina (née Holtti) spent her formative years in Brooklyn, New York. Her father was a bricklayer, and she had an older brother and sister. In the Depression years times were hard for the family, so the youngsters had to work. Toini received her first job experience, like her brother and sister, when she was still at Manual Training High School. "I took any odd job I could," said Rodkina, who now, at the age of seventy-two, is one of the hardest workers I have ever known.

With aspirations to become a doctor, Toini was a diligent Latin student in high school. But as she neared graduation, Toini realized medical school was not a real option for a member of the working class, and a female at that. Instead, she went to business school for two years where she learned the various secretarial skills and later chalked up some experience working in American offices before she left the United States.

Life, however, was not all work for Toini. She was good at track and field sports, especially discus throwing and the shot-put. Toini showed me a picture of herself as a volunteer physical education instructor of a community youth group—a trim, athletic woman demonstrating the skills of discus throwing. In another picture she has on a simple but flattering suit and is standing next to a brick house with two young men, one on each side of her, their arms around her shoulders. The tall, dark and handsome young man to her right had come to her house with his friend the day before she left for the Soviet Union to persuade her to stay and marry him. Toini's smile in the picture is impish; the offer was tempting but she had different plans and was determined to see them through. Her whole family was headed for Soviet Karelia. She looked forward to the pioneering experience with great enthusiasm.

All her life Toini had been taught by her parents that Communists were kind and thoughtful people, that the goals of the

Soviet Union were the most humane ever. She never ceased to be amazed at how frightened most Americans were of even the thought of communism, and their lack of even the most elementary knowledge of socialist principles and life-style.

Toini answered the Soviet Union's call for help in Karelia because she had been brought up to try to be useful wherever needed and also because she was interested in seeing the country that elicited so much controversy. Nothing could have stopped Toini from following her convictions and pursuing her dream, surely not a marriage proposal. On July 4, 1934, over fifty years ago, a gleeful Toini stepped off the Soviet steamship that had brought her family across the Atlantic all the way to Leningrad.

Aside from having to learn Russian, Toini and the other Americans she came with from Leningrad to Petrozavodsk had to get accustomed to the new society. Did she suffer from culture shock in the beginning? She says no. She had read and heard much about the Soviet Union from Communist Party literature and Party people who had been to the country, and found the reality was not significantly different from what she had imagined.

There were differences in cultural attitudes and behavior that she recalls observing right away, differences that helped her adapt more quickly. She noticed people would always rush to one another's aid. She had known C.P.U.S.A. members in the United States who were especially sensitive to the needs of others, but seeing such behavior as a widespread phenomenon in the Soviet Union made her feel particularly secure in the decision her family had made to move to the Soviet Union. Toini's appreciation for the warmth she felt toward her from the Soviet people, and the confidence she had because her parents had jobs they knew they could keep, were two important reasons why not a moment's regret crossed her mind in the early period of adjustment.

Toini pointed out, however, that not all the North Americans took to the country. "Some people went back home within months after they arrived," she recalled. "They were people with money, people who were used to fancy living conditions, not the working class conditions my family had known in Brooklyn. I had no use for such people in those days. Looking back now, however, I realize that for people who were used to soft living conditions, Karelia really wasn't an easy place to adjust to. As I

recall, the people who stayed on were working class people, like my family, and the ones who gave up early were affluent types."

Part of being a good Communist to Toini in those days was a selflessness she now feels was naive. Since she had always wanted to be a doctor, it would have only been natural for her to pursue that dream in the Soviet Union where large numbers of medical students were women and where education was tuition-free. But for Toini there was no stopping for college. "How could I take out the time for college when socialism had to be built?" she explained, adding, "I suppose it was naive of me, but that's the way I felt."

After the initial "high" of joining the Soviet people in the exciting experiment of socialism, Toini, who moved to Moscow in the late 1930s, and her family, who stayed in Karelia, gradually settled into the routine of going to work every day, sometimes attending the theater in the evening, and building a new future for themselves and their adopted country.

Harry Rapoport of Montreal, Canada, wanted to go to the Soviet Union to get away from the Great Depression. By the age of eighteen, when he decided to pack his bags, he had seen just too much of hard times. Harry's luck had been bad since 1917 when he was not more than a year old: his father, a tailor, died, leaving his mother with three small children. Mrs. Rapoport had to go to work and trust her oldest daughter, all of four years old, to look after younger sister Clara who was two and a half, and Harry who was a year old.

In 1922 Harry's mother remarried and soon gave birth to twins—a girl and a boy. The family's income did not appreciate significantly to the additional children and the increased needs of the older ones. Thus, at the age of twelve Harry went to work as a delivery boy for a local store. When he finished public school at the age of thirteen, he was hired as an electrician's apprentice and went on to technical high school.

"In the 1930s unemployment was very high because of the Depression," said Harry as he began explaining his reasons for moving to the U.S.S.R. "I didn't have a steady job and wanted very much to go to college, but saw no way to do that in Canada. And I didn't want to be a burden on my family. I had read a lot about the Soviet Union in literature printed by the Young Communist League of Canada. So I set off for Dnepropetrovsk, where my aunt and uncle were living."

Harry pawned a gold watch that had belonged to his father, and used the money to pay his way to the Soviet Union. Having no other funds, he could not afford to take with him more than a few items of clothing. He said goodbye to his family in Montreal and left with an easy mind, figuring they would all follow him to the Soviet Union as soon as possible.

When Harry arrived in the Soviet Union in November 1934 he found everything so strange. "It was very hard to get used

to the life here," he said. "In 1934 they still had the ration system. The ration was not what I was used to, the prices, and so on. It was very hard to get accustomed to it, but I had made up my mind that once I came to the Soviet Union to work and study I would overcome all the difficulties. And that's how life went on," concluded Harry.

Dnepropetrovsk, southeast of Kiev on the Dnieper River in the Ukraine, was not then the large industrial city it is today. It had a few two-story buildings on the main street. The rest of the small town was filled with one-story structures. Because the availability of housing was a problem, as it was in most parts of the Soviet Union in the 1930s, Harry lived with his uncle and aunt the first year. Then he rented himself a separate room.

Harry's first job in Dnepropetrovsk was as an electrician. He worked as well as he could, though he didn't know the language at all. "I was a pretty good worker," he recalled. "I didn't have to speak well, just work well. They valued me, and when the Stakhanovite movement got started I was one of the first candidates." He proudly took out the yellowed papers he has kept to this day which were given to the young Canadian in appreciation of his workmanship and recorded his official title as a Stakhanovite.

Harry first made friends with some young Jewish men at work because they could converse with him in Yiddish while he was still learning Russian and Ukrainian: "We were always together," he said about his early pals. "I watched how they behaved and tried to be like them. On Sundays we went to the park and the beach. They read books and discussed them together. I took to this comradely life right away. They did their best to keep me from feeling lonely. We still see each other."

Harry's voice was filled with amazement as he looked back on his first impressions of the novel world he found himself in over fifty years ago: "You know, there were almost no similarities to the life I had left behind, almost none." The local people were eager to befriend Harry and had a genuine warmth about them that he had never before experienced in others. And although many aspects of the new life-style were difficult to adjust to, mainly the spartan living conditions, Harry said, "Everything was new to me, and everything was interesting."

I suppose the people of Dnepropetrovsk also found this young man from Canada interesting: "When I came here I was

asked to speak about life in Canada. I would talk through an interpreter and spoke quite often. I told them about life in Canada and the differences between the two countries, how I lived there, what the young people were like, and why I had come to the Soviet Union."

Once Harry established himself on the job and had his own room, he began thinking about getting that college education he had wanted so badly when he left Canada. As a worker, he could study special college preparatory courses. He took those courses by correspondence and afterwards entered the Dnepropetrovsk Institute of Foreign Languages, majoring in English. That was in 1938. The institute which had just been organized had very few teachers, so Harry was offered a job teaching English while he was still a student.

Harry's parents and brothers and sisters had intended to follow him to the Soviet Union but as he pointed out with noticeable regret, "As things went on it was impossible." However, Harry began building his own family when he married a young woman in Dnepropetrovsk in 1939. In 1941 their first child was born, a girl, and then the war began.

Celia Nelson was one of the later arrivals in Karelia; she came in 1935 at the age of twenty. Both her parents worked in a private home together in Concord, Massachusetts—her father as chauffeur and her mother as cook. After finishing high school in Maynard, Celia went to Lowell where she was enrolled in a four-year teachers' college to become a music teacher. Meanwhile, to pay for her room and board she worked as a nanny for a minister and his wife.

Celia now cites the two years she was in the teachers' college as one of the most satisfying periods in her life. She loved music, did well in her courses, and got along splendidly with the minister's family for whom she worked.

In Celia's community she was known for her light-heartedness; so it is no wonder that in faraway Karelia at least two young men were looking forward to welcoming this petite and good-natured young woman. One of the men had known Celia in the U.S. and had been telling his friend all about her, boasting that she would be his "girl."

The young man who had heard so much about Celia was Toivo Kohonen, who had come to Karelia in 1931 at the age of sixteen from Minneapolis, Minnesota. Toivo's father had been a tailor in the United States but because of the Depression could not get work. After having travelled all over the country searching for jobs and failing in the effort, Toivo's father took his whole family to Karelia.

Toivo had not been especially eager to leave Minneapolis, but at the same time did not question his father's decision. He went where the family went. "I didn't know much about Russia, just that it existed," recalled Toivo. "Americans didn't know anything about Russia in those days. But I was interested and ready to go anywhere. My parents wanted to go, so I did too."

Toivo had been a carefree adolescent who had few interests

other than playing the trombone which he had learned to do on his own by fiddling with his older brother's instrument on the sneak. He became skilled enough to play in school bands and at the private parties of the wealthy; by the time he moved to Karelia he was as adept as any professional trombone player.

He apparently adjusted immediately because, as he told me: "I forgot all about the United States when I came here. I didn't have time for that. We had fun, a lot of fun. I made new friends here: I got acquainted with some of them on the boat and met other young people working in the garage. It was more fun here. I don't know exactly why. Perhaps it's because we had a lot of dances and went to the club so often. The young people were more active here than they were in our Finn Hall in Minnesota."

The first job Toivo obtained was as a mechanic's apprentice in an auto repair shop. He worked there with Hank Siren who was one of his roommates. Later, Toivo became a trombone player in the Karelian radio symphony orchestra. That was in 1934. He also played the trombone at the American-Finnish club dances.

"The living conditions were not good at all. We single men lived in rooms with three or four other men," recalled Toivo. "But that didn't bother anybody. We enjoyed living together," he laughed as he thought back on those days, as though recalling some practical joke played on a roommate. "It brought people closer together."

By 1936 Toivo was sure he was going to stay on in the Soviet Union, even though his father and mother had returned to the United States. They had been living in the woods where conditions were worse than in Petrozavodsk. Mrs. Kohonen's health was failing so the couple decided to leave the Karelian wilderness. It was in 1936 that Toivo, not having the least desire to return to the U.S., became a Soviet citizen at the age of twenty-one.

Toivo and the other jazz musicians in Karelia who had come from the United States were well known in their own community, and were even mentioned in the *Moscow News*. In 1938 Toivo started playing in a movie theater in Leningrad. He played at the cinema and restaurant there for two years. "I really liked playing in bands. I was always well liked wherever I worked and so I enjoyed my jobs. In those days we played a lot of

American music and music by Soviet composers." In October 1938 Toivo joined the broadcasting system band in Moscow.

Meanwhile, Toivo's future wife Celia Nelson, who arrived in 1935, was doing her own adjusting to life in the Soviet Union. "I knew what to expect here," she told me. "We were told life wasn't going to be too easy."

The Nelsons applied for citizenship soon after coming because they saw they would be able to adapt. When I asked Celia what helped her get used to the new life-style so quickly she said: "One reason was because in general Russians like foreigners; they are interested in you. That was true in those days, as well as today." The other reason she gave was: "I'm an optimist by nature. I just figured I'd get used to everything, and I did. I don't remember that we had any difficulties with any of the neighbors, for instance. We had a big room the three of us lived in but shared a kitchen with other families. I don't remember people having quarrels. Even in later years when we lived in Moscow and shared kitchens with other families, people were more generous than they are now that they live separately. The children were better brought up. They didn't spend so much time alone. There was always somebody home in those shared apartments. People looked after each other's children and felt responsible for each other."

Celia met Toivo in Petrozavodsk the first day she arrived. She chuckled as Toivo boasted: "I was ready for her. I knew about her long before she came here because one of my roommates had bragged about her. He said, 'When Celia comes I'm going to marry her.' I said to myself, 'Well, we'll see.' "

Toivo's campaign to win over Celia succeeded, because she became his "steady" right away. Even when he was in Leningrad they corresponded regularly and tried to see each other as often as possible. Celia did not stay with Toivo in Leningrad because she wanted to go to a music school in Petrozavodsk. She received a stipend, so she did not have to work. However, once again Celia did not finish music school—this time because of her marriage to Toivo in 1939 and his new job with the Radio Moscow Jazz Orchestra that took the couple into a new life in Moscow.

While Toivo was in the Radio Moscow Jazz Orchestra, which he joined as soon as it was organized and stayed with until it broke up ten years later, he became well known in Soviet jazz circles. Throughout the war, Toivo and the other musicians pre-

sented over 100 concerts to the soldiers at the front and played at least ten concerts a month over the radio. Concerts and other types of entertainment were encouraged by the Supreme Command during the war to boost morale. Often entertainers who volunteered for action were turned down because it was felt they would make a bigger contribution as performers for the troops. Toivo worked under Alexander Varlamov and Alexander Tsfasman, who were among the first composers and conductors to popularize jazz in the Soviet Union and play American jazz and compose music. Toivo regards those ten years he played with the band as the best time of his career.

Emma Alperin, born in 1919 in Chicago, was the daughter of Jewish immigrants from Byelorussia who had left Russia in 1912 to seek their fortune. In the United States, Emma's mother was a housewife and her father a bookbinder, a craft he had mastered in Byelorussia.

Emma's father found a good job in the United States at the very outset, but his luck changed in 1926 when he was working a night shift, had an accident and lost three fingers. When he recuperated no one would hire him; there were plenty of other bookbinders around who had all their fingers. Relatives in Los Angeles persuaded him to bring his family there, where they would teach him paper hanging. He agreed, found a job with the help of his relatives, but in 1929 he lost it when the Great Depression began. That was the start of eight long years of unbroken unemployment.

The Alperins managed to survive during those difficult Depression years because Emma's mother went to work as a seamstress, earning five dollars a week. In the meantime Emma's older brother, who had been born in 1913, finished high school and went out looking for work. It took him a whole year, but he finally obtained work with a wholesale fruit company. He received four dollars a week for loading orange crates. When another hungry boy came looking for work at the company and offered to do the same job for three dollars, Emma's brother was fired.

During those difficult years the family lived in a wooden frame house in someone's backyard in what was then a Jewish working class neighborhood of Los Angeles. The house had three small rooms and a kitchen.

Despite the family's poverty, Emma's brother had begun studying to play the violin at the age of six at a charity, or, as it was known then, a settlement school for the poor; the lessons

were free of charge. Frustrated in his efforts to earn a living and unable to continue seriously studying music, the nineteen-year-old decided to "seek his fortune" in the Soviet Union. "At that time there were a lot of young people who were finishing school and wanted to come to the Soviet Union," commented Emma. Thus, in 1932, her brother bought a one-way ticket to the Soviet Union and said goodbye to his parents and sister.

"I only knew about Russia from my brother's letters. That got me into trouble with my history teacher when we came to the history of Russia," said Emma with a chuckle. "She was always telling us how bad it was in Russia, about how people were dying of hunger there, that everything was so terrible. I brought her my brother's letters and pictures. He sent us pictures where there was lots of food on the table. I showed them to her and said, 'Who am I to believe—my brother or you?' She gave me a bad grade."

Emma also recalled newspaper articles about the Soviet Union in the same vein as her teacher's descriptions, and cartoons of Russians with knives in their mouths, long hair and beards, looking like bandits. "That was what they wanted us American schoolchildren to believe."

Emma's brother wrote to his parents saying that if they ever wanted to see him again they would have to come to the Soviet Union because he would never return to the United States. He was studying at the Kharkov Conservatory of Music and was at the same time playing in the local symphony orchestra.

Meanwhile, her mother's relatives were writing from Dnepropetrovsk, offering to help the family settle there with them. There was some economic relief in the U.S. by 1934 because of Roosevelt's measures: under the National Recovery Act Emma's father was given a job as a caretaker for a park band, earning twelve dollars a week. "We began getting some government help—food once a week and clothing," recalled Emma. "But we felt terrible, dependent, because we couldn't manage without this relief. That's the way my parents felt about it. So they wrote to the Soviet Union for permission to live there; it took two years, until 1936."

At the age of seventeen and with a high school diploma in her pocket, Emma Alperin arrived with her parents in the Soviet Union on November 2, 1936. Her parents were returning to their homeland, but she had left hers. "My parents never became

Americans in America," commented Emma. "My mother spoke English poorly, although my father spoke better. They were aliens in the United States. But surely my brother and I were Americans."

When I asked Emma to recall her earliest emotions in the Soviet Union she said: "At that time there was a very big difference between living conditions in the two countries. Now I don't suppose it's as great. I can't say I suffered culture shock. I was very happy that I came here because I wanted so much to go to college and I had no opportunity to do that in the United States."

The family was in Leningrad for three days, then went to Moscow for a week. On November 7 they went to the parade in celebration of the anniversary of the 1917 socialist revolution, saw Lenin's mausoleum, the Kremlin and some museums. "It was really interesting," she recalled. "Of course we were excited about being in Moscow; everything was so new."

From Moscow Emma and her parents took the train to Dnepropetrovsk where they were met by her brother, who had been living in the Soviet Union since 1932. He had finished the Kharkov Conservatory of Music as a violinist and had been playing with the local symphony orchestra. When he moved from Kharkov to Dnepropetrovsk to be with his parents he worked for small bands that played in movie theaters because at that time the city did not have a symphony orchestra. However, his longing to play with an orchestra took him back to Kharkov, where he remained until he went into the army in World War II.

In Dnepropetrovsk the Alperins lived with one of Mrs. Alperin's brothers who had remained in Russia. Emma's three uncles in Dnepropetrovsk had been very low-income workers who sided with the revolution. The new socialist system had given them the opportunity to receive an education, but only when they were already family men at the end of the 1920s. They became engineers whereas they had all previously been factory workers. So when Emma and her parents came to live with them, all the members of the large family were full of enthusiasm about their lives and supportive of the Soviet government.

A year after her arrival, Emma was admitted to the Institute of Foreign Languages that was just established without taking entrance exams because she still knew little Russian but, of course, knew English well. Two years later, in February 1939 Emma

was hired by the same institute to teach English while she was still working toward her degree.

Here is how Emma recalls her college years: "Everyone was helping me while I was at the institute, both teachers and students. All of them liked me and I liked them very much. They helped me with my Russian and filling in my lecture notes when I didn't understand everything. I needed a lot of help, and no one refused. My friends were all Russians and Ukrainians. My best friend lives here now; we went to college together. Most of my closest friends were killed during the war, including my fiancé."

When Emma began teaching English she still had fresh memories of the United States, and her students would ask her many questions about her life there. "They enjoyed listening to all of these things, about American holidays, customs and the way of life," recalled Emma. "My family didn't celebrate American holidays, but we remembered them. The first years we celebrated Thanksgiving; we knew it was on a certain Thursday but that was just in the first years, then we stopped remembering them. Christmas and Easter holidays we also remembered, but just for a while."

Just as Emma's studies at college became a community project, so, too, was the task of getting her father a job when he arrived in Dnepropetrovsk. Emma said, "Here my father could work as a bookbinder. As it turned out, his injury did not affect the quality of his work. He was very good, and considered a Stakhanovite."

Emma's mother was a housewife who missed only one thing from the United States—gas stoves. All they had in Dnepropetrovsk were one-burner stoves which created a lot of soot. "That's the only thing that annoyed her," commented Emma. "I didn't miss anything because I was so happy here. I had many friends so I didn't pay any attention to the physical discomforts that bothered my mother at that time."

By the late 1930s migration to the Soviet Union from the United States and Canada came to a halt. One of the reasons was the economic situation in both the U.S.S.R. and North America. The Great Depression was on the wane and therefore fewer North Americans sought jobs in the Soviet Union. At the same time, the Soviet Union no longer had the acute need for skilled workers and professionals from abroad as it did during the industrialization effort of the late 1920s and early 1930s. So, although diplomatic relations were established in 1933 between the United States and the Soviet Union, and trade expanded between the two countries, permanent migration to the U.S.S.R. gradually declined at the end of the decade.

The nation's successful first five-year plan (1928-1933) that had been completed one year ahead of schedule and the good results of the second five-year plan (1933-1937) had brought about substantial economic progress, especially in industry. The establishment of collective farms throughout the countryside made possible the extensive use of tractors, harvesters and other farm machinery, so less workers were needed in agriculture and more could move to cities to take jobs in industry, transport and construction. And the educational system was rapidly training engineers and skilled workers.

The once backward, mainly agrarian country, where peasants seeing a tractor for the first time thought it might have supernatural powers, had become a modern industrial nation by the late 1930s. Between 1932 and 1937 industrial output more than doubled and was six times greater than it had been in 1913. A total of 4,500 industrial enterprises were put into operation. The engineering industry was especially successful during the second five-year plan period. Labor productivity in industry rose 82 percent. The Soviet Union became a powerful industrial nation, economically independent from the capitalist world. Its industrial growth rate exceeded that of the main capitalist countries. The

average annual growth rate during the second five-year plan was 17.1 percent. The U.S.S.R.'s volume of industrial output became the highest in Europe and second in the world after the United States. Thus, economic planners perhaps felt there was no longer a need for workers and engineers from abroad who were unfamiliar with the specific methods of Soviet industries and who knew little or no Russian.

Another factor affecting migration was the general political climate of the late 1930s, which were extremely complicated years in Soviet history and international affairs. At the beginning of 1933 the Nazis came to power in Germany and began preparing for another war. In 1935 Italy attacked independent Ethiopia (Abyssinia). In 1936 right-wing forces in Spain rebelled against the republican government and were assisted by Germany and Italy. That same year Germany and Japan signed the "anti-Comintern pact" aimed mainly against the Soviet Union; soon afterwards Italy also joined the pact. In 1937 Japan attacked China. France, Britain and the United States showed no willingness to form an alliance with the Soviet Union and impede the aggressive designs of the Nazis, whose stated aims were to destroy Communism and the Soviet Union.

While preparations were being made for war, espionage and subversive activities against the Soviet Union increased. For instance, false evidence planted by German intelligence linked top Soviet Party leaders and military commanders with German espionage.¹ Josef Stalin's response to real and perceived threats turned into spy mania, and repressive measures were taken on a mass scale. The innocent victims included loyal Communist Party members and dedicated government officials.

Immigrants were among those arrested. Many former North American Finns who had come to help build up Karelia were taken away to labor camps, accused of being spies. Former North American farmers who had developed the *Seyatel* agricultural commune in the Rostov Region vanished in the night. Some of the immigrants who had remained in Kemerovo from the Kuzbas project of the 1920s were also arrested. In Moscow, the international club on Herzen Street, where immigrants had gone every night to dances or various cultural activities, was suddenly

¹ Albert Szymanski, *Human Rights in the Soviet Union*, Zed Books, Ltd., London, 1984, pp. 252-53.

deserted. Some old-timers remember feeling then that it was not a good idea to freely associate with unknown immigrants there, or anywhere else, in order to avoid being accused of being associated with a possible spy, or "enemy of the people." Not having any archival or census data on that period, it is impossible to say what percentage of the immigrant community was arrested, especially in comparison to the rest of the population. However, the recollections of individuals I have met indicate that many innocent immigrants were victims, particularly males.

These immigrants' reminiscences also provide some insights into how the arrests were perceived then. Those who did not personally know the individuals arrested assumed the authorities had adequate evidence against the accused. Those whose family members or close friends were victims were certain that the charges were groundless; they thought that it was a mistake and that justice would prevail. Some of them even believed the purges were the work of anti-Soviet forces trying to eradicate the devoted Communists and undermine the people's morale.

Anna Preikshas, whose father, brother and husband were arrested in 1937 and perished in labor camps during World War II (they were exonerated in 1957), expressed a common feeling I met in my interviews with other immigrants: that the excesses of the Stalin period were used and even guided by infiltrators wanting to undermine the socialist state and turn public opinion against the government. However, there is no scholarly support for this view.

Throughout the 1930s Stalin was busy consolidating his power in the Soviet Union. Lenin warned the C.P.S.U. Central Committee in December 1922 that "Comrade Stalin, having become Secretary-General, has unlimited authority concentrated in his hands, and I am not sure whether he will always be capable of using that authority with sufficient caution. . . I suggest that the comrades think about a way of removing Stalin from that post and appointing another man in his stead who in all other respects differs from Comrade Stalin in having only one advantage, namely, that of being more tolerant, more loyal, more polite and more considerate to the comrades, less capricious, etc. This circumstance may appear to be a negligible detail. But . . . it is a detail which can assume decisive importance."¹ Despite Lenin's scathing

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Last Letters and Articles*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, pp. 9-10.

criticism, Stalin had managed to maintain his position, at first by controlling his negative behavior and later by simply annihilating his opposition. This Stalin managed successfully after the 17th Party Congress in 1934 when a number of delegates were against his re-election. Within a short time after the Congress, 1,108 of the 1,966 delegates were arrested and later shot.¹

It was in this climate that the notorious purges were carried out in 1937 and 1938. Stalin's justification was that as socialism developed in the Soviet Union the class struggle became more intense, and therefore the people and state security had to be on the lookout for traitors and saboteurs. In a decision passed in June 1956 "On Overcoming the Personality Cult and Its Consequences," the Central Committee of the Communist Party said this thinking was incorrect, that it had applied only to certain stages of the transitional period from capitalism to socialism. But it was certainly not true of the late 1930s when socialism had built a firm foundation and the former exploiter classes no longer had an economic base. "In practice this incorrect theoretical thinking served as justification for the most flagrant violations of socialist legality and for mass-scale repression."² The decision also stated that the situation was further complicated by the illegal actions of Beria, head of state security at the time.

Official Soviet sources, including the resolutions of the 20th Congress in 1956 and the aforementioned Central Committee decision, condemned Stalin's personality cult. The condemnation of Stalin period repression and the analysis of it made at that Congress continue to be supported today, as General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev noted in an interview with *L'Humanité* in February 1986.³

Many immigrants told me that the purges of the late 1930s did not dampen the general enthusiasm for building the socialist economy and promoting culture, because few people had any inkling of the sinister nature of the repressions or the scale. Enthusiasm was mirrored in the optimistic films, music and literature of that time. It was this high morale, support for the so-

¹ *Filosofskaya entsiklopediya* (Philosophical Encyclopedia), Vol. 3, Sovetskaya entsiklopedia, Moscow, 1964, p. 116.

² *Decision of the CPSU Central Committee "On Overcoming the Personality Cult and Its Consequences,"* Gospolitizdat, Moscow, 1956, p. 16.

³ *Pravda*, February 8, 1986.

cialist system and the Soviet leadership that united the people and inspired their heroism in the terrible years when the Soviet Union was invaded and partly occupied by Nazi Germany between 1941 and 1945.

Ex-North Americans, who were settled in the Soviet Union and had taken Soviet citizenship, shared the same fate in that war as other Soviet citizens. They fought and died on the battlefields, in Nazi-occupied territory, contributed to the war effort by working day and night on the home front, and perished of starvation and disease. Twenty million Soviet people died in that horrible war, among them many ex-North Americans who were ready to lay down their lives not only for the freedom of their new homeland, but for a world safe from fascism.

The heart-rending story of an ex-American woman, Akulina Perry, and her seven sons who died in the war, was published on April 8, 1986 in the national daily *Izvestia*. It was printed as an open letter to the only known survivor of the family, Dorothy Panameroff (née Perry), in Erie, Pennsylvania. Mrs. Panameroff had inquired through the Red Cross about her mother and brothers whom she had last seen before World War II in Leningrad. Andy Perry, an American mechanic, and his wife Akulina had moved to the Soviet Union with their children in the early 1930s, working first in the Urals and then in Leningrad. Later, their only daughter, Dorothy, went to visit her grandmother in the United States, fell in love and remained there with her husband. She corresponded with her family until the beginning of the war and knew that her father had died, but she received no more news of her mother and brothers. The *Izvestia* reporter who investigated the case, Ella Maximova, related in detail the story she had pieced together from Leningrad archives, and from the only person she was able to find who knew one of the Perry boys.

The three oldest boys—John, Mike and William—fought in the Red Army. Mike and William were with the Soviet forces caught in Nazi-besieged Leningrad. There the soldiers died not only of battle wounds but of hunger. The small trickle of supplies sent into Leningrad over Lake Ladoga did not contain enough food for either the soldiers or the civilians. The hospital records on Mike and William state they died of malnutrition in February and March 1942.

Their mother most likely was informed of their deaths only

weeks before her own. Mrs. Perry and her ten-year-old son, Jimmy, died of starvation in Leningrad on May 8, 1942. They were buried in the common graves of the Piskaryovskoye Memorial Cemetery along with thousands of other victims of the Leningrad blockade. *The winter they died, more people perished in Leningrad than the total number of Americans lost in World War II.* Maximova went to the site in the cemetery where Mrs. Perry and her son were buried, and in describing the visit she wrote to Dorothy Panameroff reassuringly: "Do not torture yourself with the thought that you are far away from Leningrad and your mother's grave. Common graves not only belong to the relatives of the deceased but to the Soviet people. Tears and flowers are in abundance there all year round."

The same day Mrs. Perry died, fourteen-year-old George was sent to an orphanage that was later evacuated over Lake Ladoga. There the trail ends. Nothing is known about what happened to either George or his two younger brothers, Mitchell and Ephraim.

The only person Maximova was able to find who had known any of the Perrys was Sergei Yudin. He served in the same division with John and was his friend. By the time the two of them met in the summer of 1944 at a training school for commanders, John had already been wounded twice—in the shoulder and the head. Yudin recalled liking John at once. "He was a good-looking man and outgoing," said Yudin. "He was a nice person and got along well with everyone." When the two men graduated in November they went back to their division on the Baltic coast as junior lieutenants. Each was put in command of a platoon and began preparing their men for battle. Their time to fight came in February, just a few months before the end of the war. Yudin recalled what happened:

"John was in the first company; I was in the third. His was the first to go into battle. He jumped out of the trench ahead of his men and was shot in the stomach immediately. When I ran by he was already dead."

Yudin also told Maximova that John said he had one brother, but stoically never spoke of the large family he had lost. So apparently at the beginning of 1945 one other Perry boy was still alive. Maximova appealed to any reader who might have information about these boys to write to *Izvestia*. While her letter to Dorothy did not offer much hope, she wrote that even

now, forty years later, members of Soviet families separated during the war were still being reunited.

Maximova's main message, however, to Soviet readers and to whomever in the United States would read her letter to Dorothy, was that this family's tragic history symbolized the links between our two peoples and the common responsibility we share for preventing another, far more destructive war.

"I hope," wrote Maximova, "that your friends and neighbors, their friends and neighbors, to whom you may translate my letter feel at least some of the alarm we do every time the word war is uttered. The Perry boys—sons of the United States and citizens of the Soviet Union—lost their lives in a war that caused unparalleled bloodshed. However, humankind is threatened by another one that would be far worse. There will be no survivors to look for anyone. I am appealing to you publicly because we can prevent this from happening by working together, because the flags of the world are made of threads that unite not only nations but people—individuals, specific people with names."

Chapter Three

COMING HOME

After World War II, because of the vast destruction across the Soviet Union, the consequent acute housing shortage and difficult living conditions¹, immigration did not resume for several years. When it did recommence in the late 1940s and early 1950s, after postwar reconstruction was complete, the vast majority of the immigrants from North America were returning immigrants motivated, for one, by the pride they had felt for their homeland's war efforts. Some of them came with spouses and children who had grown up in North America and these were the ones I sought to interview, since they, just like any other immigrant, had to adapt to their new environment before they felt at home.

* * *

Carl Watts was born in Canada in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in October 1930. His immigrant parents had arrived a couple of years before from what is now the western part of the Ukraine, but in those days was still part of Poland. Like thousands of other poor farmers in that part of Poland, the ethnic Russian couple migrated to Canada in the late 1920s. There, eager to work just to earn a living, Carl's father found one job after another and managed to support his small family comfortably. He was a fitter, construction worker and farmer.

Two years after Carl was born the couple had another son they named George. Although the first language the two boys spoke with their parents was Russian, they soon learned English with their neighborhood friends and automatically fit into the Canadian life-style around them. The boys received most of their schooling in Hamilton, Ontario, which is where the family moved in 1941.

¹ Nazi occupation troops had destroyed 1,710 cities and towns, over 70,000 villages, around 32,000 industrial enterprises, 65,000 kilometers of railways, 98,000 collective farms, and 1,876 state farms. Total damage has been estimated as two trillion, 569 billion rubles.—*Ed.*

From an early age Carl and George were taught to work hard and value labor. In the summertime, for instance, they would go with their parents to pick fruit in local orchards, and for a larger sum of money they would pick tobacco leaves south of Hamilton. Carl thinks it was this early experience earning wages that developed in him and his brother a conscientious attitude toward work that they have never abandoned.

They began to learn about the Soviet Union during World War II. "My father had a big map of the Soviet Union on the wall," recalled Carl. "He put up flags where the Germans were advancing. I was eleven years old then and followed the troop movements." Carl recalls people in Canada talking about how wonderful the Russians were because of their heroic war efforts.

I heard this same kind of information about American attitudes to the Soviet Union from Vladimir Pozner, Soviet TV and radio commentator who was living in New York City with his Soviet father and French mother during World War II. Pozner said that the Americans felt so friendly toward the Soviet Union that the Russian Marshal Timoshenko was portrayed as the Irish Marshal Tim O'Shenko. Soviets came to New York in those days on ships that were taking Lend-lease goods back to the Soviet Union. Vladimir remembers the rallies organized to greet the Soviet ships, people screaming, crying and laughing with joy.

The Pozners, like the Watts, had a huge wall map of the Soviet Union and Europe during the war and would use a black pencil to draw in the Nazi advances based on the newspaper reports. "I remember very well his telling me the Nazis would never take Moscow," said Pozner about his father, "that they would never win. I remember American friends saying to my father, 'Oh we're so sorry Mr. Pozner what's happening to your country,' and he would say, 'Don't worry.' They would look at him and feel sorry for him because they could see no way the Russians would stop the Nazis."

But they did stop the Nazis, and this developed in youngsters like Carl and his brother George, whose parents had come from what was then Soviet territory, strong kindred feelings for the country.

In Hamilton, the boys went to Westdale High, a school they remember fondly. Outside school they were involved in the cultural programs of the Federation of Russian Canadians and the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians. They played ice hockey

like all other Canadian boys from the time they could barely walk, and Carl learned to play the violin, an instrument he had mastered so well by the age of twenty that one of his teachers advised him to make a career of it. Carl, however, was not particularly interested in devoting all his time to music, so his violin playing stopped there.

What Carl learned to love more than anything else in his teens was flying planes. In high school he had been in the cadet corps where he took flying lessons and managed to get a private pilots' license. The only portrait of Carl, displayed in his Moscow living room today, shows him as a teenager in his cadet uniform.

Carl really wanted to join the Royal Canadian Air Force but one thing stopped him. Before World War II his father had applied for Soviet citizenship and permission to return to his homeland, the western regions of the Ukraine, which was now part of the Soviet Union. Because of the war, his application was not processed. After the war was over, in 1945, the family was issued Soviet passports by the Soviet Embassy that had just been opened in Ottawa when diplomatic relations were established between the U.S.S.R. and Canada. Thus, joining the R.C.A.F. was out of the question until the Soviet authorities made a decision on the family's entry visas.

Carl had trained in high school to be a radio technician, but no jobs were to be found in his trade when he went job hunting. So he went to work at Fasco Steel Works as a time checker on open hearth and electric furnaces. He worked there for two years, quit, and then found a job as a time checker in the electrical department of Otis Fenson Elevator Company.

Carl was working at this company and George was enrolled at McMaster University when the family learned in November 1951 that the Soviet Union had granted each member entry visas. Until then (beginning in 1948) the Soviet Union had been allowing into the country only individuals living in Canada who had been separated from their families in the western part of the Ukraine. The Watts were the first family not in that category to be given permission to return to their homeland. Many other applicants were still waiting.

"We were adults then," said Carl, "George was just twenty and I was almost twenty-two. I had a girl there [in Canada.—*P. G.*]; we weren't engaged or anything but we were quite se-



Sally Laakso (second from right) with her family outside their home in Bonhamtown, New Jersey, a few months before leaving to the Soviet Union in 1932



Former Canadians and Americans settled in Karelia in the 1930s; old friends and their families getting together for a picnic in the 1950s. Impi Vauhkonen is second from right in row two; her husband, Väinö Rintala, is the first person in row two



Nick Weinstein (top left) posing with his friends in Los Angeles in 1930



Nick Weinstein, his wife Mary, and their first son in 1944 in the Urals where both Mary and Nick were working in the defense industry during World War II



Norma Laivo (from San Francisco) and her Russian husband in 1962 after settling in Frunze, Kirghizia. Norma spent the entire war in Nazi concentration camps

Toini Rodkina (née name Holtti) with two friends the day before leaving New York permanently. The young man standing to her right proposed to her, but she was too anxious to go to the Soviet Union to accept



Toini with her Russian husband and their three children in Moscow in the early 1950s





Emma Alperin in Los Angeles in 1934, two years before moving to Dnepropetrovsk in 1936

rious. So this presented a dilemma to me." Carl chose his parents over his friend Janice, a woman who was to turn up much later in his life most unexpectedly.

Neither Carl nor George could imagine remaining in Canada without their parents. All their lives they had worked together, and they had been active in the same immigrant cultural clubs. The family was close-knit, so splitting up at that point was inconceivable. Carl recalled how his parents and he and his brother regarded the move: "Mom and Dad wanted to return home. But George and I did not know all that much about the Soviet Union. We came because they wanted us to come. They told us everything would be all right, that we'd get an education. And so we said, 'What the hell!'"

The young men visualized the Soviet Union the way they had seen it depicted in several Soviet movies shown in the Russian and Ukrainian communities they belonged to. In fact, they ran the projectors and arranged their own private showings with their friends the night before a movie was scheduled. "What got to me most were the films about the collective farms, like *Volga, Volga* or *They Met in Moscow*, and things like that," said Carl smiling. "I had the idea that all collective farms were like the ones in those movies, which were actually shot in the country's richest farmlands."

So the decision was made. All four were going to leave Canada in March 1952. When the day came they were sent off in style by their friends. "We got a hell of a big send-off," said Carl. "It's something I'll never forget as long as I live. The news of our leaving was in the papers in Hamilton and when we got to Toronto, Christ, about five hundred people must have come to see us off. I can see it now as if it happened yesterday."

The first stop the Watts family made in the Soviet Union when they arrived in April 1952, was Brest, a western town on the Polish border and the region Mr. and Mrs. Watts had originally left to go to Canada in the 1930s. Carl, who was at that time twenty-two, said his parents decided that before going on to any big city they would visit relatives in the area:

"We came to what was called a collective farm. This is where we were really stunned. We were flabbergasted. My father too. We thought all the farms were like the one we saw in the movie *Volga, Volga*. It was 1952, seven years after the war. The area had been occupied by the Nazis during the war, so considerable

damage had been done to the economy.”

The family was in their relatives’ village three days when Carl said, “Pa, you either take us to some civilized city or we go back to Canada. I can’t stay here”

Mr. Watts had no objections to moving on to some Soviet city. They headed for Kiev. In contrast to the farms in the Brest area, Kiev, a city that had been largely demolished by Nazi occupation forces, was already rebuilt and made a good impression on the returning immigrants from Canada. “We liked Kiev very much,” recalled Carl. “We saw no signs of war and everything was really beautiful. When we got to Kiev we realized things weren’t as bad as we thought after being in the country for three days.”

In Kiev, at the Council of Ministers of the Ukraine, the Watts were told an apartment could not be made available to them at that time because of the still acute housing shortage after the war. They could go to any other city in the Ukraine and settle down, but were advised to try Voroshilovgrad first, because it had a large locomotive plant and Mr. Watts had been working in Canada as a fitter at a plant that repaired freight cars. Through the plant the family would be able to get housing much faster than if they stayed in Kiev.

Voroshilovgrad is where the Watts finally made their home. While they were looking for work and then waiting to be given an apartment from Mr. Watts’ job, they rented a house with one big room. It was their abode for one year. The first half year they had no furniture and used their trunks as beds. It was quite a come-down from the four-bedroom, two-story house they had sold in Canada. Despite the cramped living quarters, Carl said none of them complained.

Carl explained, “Perhaps it was the novelty of everything; maybe roughing it was a challenge. My father and mother never complained once; they never said they wanted to go back, they were always happy here. And George and I were content as well.”

Carl does not remember any problems with food supplies but said that many of the consumer goods they were used to in Canada were unavailable. “One of my first impressions,” he said, “was that because our clothes were so different from everybody else’s young people would come up to us in the streets and ask us where we were from.”

The young people there made the Watts brothers feel at

home. "I think our ties with the local people were good," said Carl. "They were sincere. At school and at work, neighbors, people in the streets, people we didn't even know—when they noticed we were dressed differently and heard us speak English, they would come up and talk to us."

It was this kind of attention that kept Carl and his brother from missing Canada. However, it was not just because of the welcoming attitude of the people that the Watts brothers had so many friends. "It may seem immodest, but I make friends fast," explained Carl. "I can easily find a common language with people. I've never had any trouble making friends in either country."

Finding jobs in Voroshilovgrad was not difficult. Mr. Watts went to work right away at a plant that made machinery for the coal mining industry. Carl got a job as an electrician in another plant, and George, who had no technical skills, was employed in still another plant as an apprentice lathe operator.

What struck Carl most about the job was all the breaks the workers took. "I was fresh out of a Canadian factory in 1952. At this Otis Fenson you worked your tail off, then you had a break at 10:30 or 11:00 for ten or fifteen minutes for coffee and a smoke and back to work. Here, Jesus, they just started work and would say, 'Okay, we'll break for a smoke,' do this, do that, just loaf around, you know. I was struck by that because so much time was wasted. People also did a lot of drinking on the job. At lunchtime somebody would go out and get a bottle and they would down it with their lunch. I don't think they do that now. It was only at that time."

While Carl was still making decisions about a permanent career for himself in the Soviet Union one of the options he considered was being a pilot. Upon hearing that Carl had a private pilots' license, someone suggested he apply at D.O.S.A.A.F.¹ to become a military pilot. "I went there and said, 'I'm so and so, I'm from Canada, here's my Soviet passport and my log book, I'd like to take up flying as a career.' The man answered, 'Okay, we'll let you know.' They've been letting me know ever since. Well, you can imagine this man's reaction to a person coming from Canada wanting to join the air force here! Don't forget, that was 1952."

¹ Voluntary Society for the Assistance to the Army, Air Force and Navy.

Carl was alluding to the height of the Stalin period when the mistrust of foreigners or ex-foreigners existed at official levels. However, he was not aware of this at the time. Consequently, Carl had no inkling of the dark sides of the Stalin era until after the 20th Congress in 1956 when they were discussed openly. Then, he said, it came as quite a blow to him, a revelation that took him some time to recover from. Carl reminisced:

"You know, I didn't know anything about Stalin's repression, not a clue. I was working at the factory in March 1953 when Stalin died; they had a memorial meeting at the main square in Voroshilovgrad and I was picked as one of the factory's representatives. I remember crying like a baby. It had been my dream to see Stalin in person."

Although Carl was never taken in the Soviet air force, he got a chance to fly a plane once in 1953. The secretary of the factory's Young Communist League made arrangements on Aviation Day to take Carl out in a two-seater biplane. "He gave me the controls," said Carl, "and I had a fantastic time. I've never felt anything as thrilling as being at the controls of an aircraft. You're king up there. That was the last time I flew. Well, I figured I wouldn't be able to make flying a career, so I gradually forgot about it."

Carl and George decided fairly soon after their arrival in Voroshilovgrad that they wanted to go to college, but they needed a Soviet high school diploma. They completed the ninth and tenth grades at night school, but their Russian held them back. They knew conversational Russian because they spoke it with their parents, but knew little grammar. "I had these technical inclinations, but because of our inferior knowledge of Russian we were advised to go to a foreign languages college," said Carl. "We put out feelers to Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev and Kharkov about the regulations, and we received a reply from Leningrad which was the only city that could give us hostel accommodations. So that was where we went."

I asked Carl when he and his brother began feeling really at home in the Soviet Union. He said it was when they finally got into college. By that time they were no longer corresponding with their Canadian friends, and Carl, who had written to his first love in Canada, never received an answer from her. Canada seemed far away: "We figured by that time that we were here to stay, we'd get an education and get good jobs."

It was hard to find people from the United States who had come to the Soviet Union in the postwar period before Stalin died in 1953. One of the few I did locate was willing to be interviewed but withdrew his story before publication. The times were not conducive to easy adaptation. I learned about this period from other conversations and from books on the subject.

With the onset of the Cold War in 1947-48¹, another wave of repression began that lasted until Stalin's death. It was manifested in a campaign against not only people who had personal ties with Western countries, but even those who made positive comments about Western science, technology, culture and the arts.

It appears that, unlike in the 1930s, most of the foreign-born were affected, including ex-North Americans, although the scope of the repression among the general population was smaller than that of the 1930s. Consequently, this period had an even more damaging effect than the purges of the 1930s on the attitudes of the foreign-born toward their adopted home. This was especially true of the idealistic newcomers who had left behind them in the United States the McCarthy era paranoia of Communists and witch-hunt hearings and were uninformed about the realities of the personality cult of Stalin.

While only some of the foreign-born were exiled, most of them lost their jobs for some period of time. Usually lame excuses were offered. Many were given no explanation at all. Some young women had small children at the time and simply decided to stay home with their youngsters or work as interpreters or translators

¹ Cold War policy was declared in the speech made by Winston Churchill on March 5, 1946 in Fulton, Missouri. The British Prime Minister called for an Anglo-American alliance to fight "world Communism" led by Soviet Russia.

on a free-lance basis or until the wind changed. Several people I talked to took their cases to their trade unions and the courts and won back their jobs. For others, the hardships and the humiliation caused by this period made them cynical.

The repression ended almost immediately after Stalin's death. Within a few years the 20th Party Congress condemned these illegal actions. Many of the people who lived through those times have told me that Nikita Khrushchev may have made gross errors in his economic policies, but he must be given credit for the de-Stalinization effort and for restoring democratic practices.

Throughout the rest of the 1950s and the early 1960s, people moving to the Soviet Union arrived in a country that was beginning to open up not only its windows to the West, but also its doors. No longer was a Western immigrant automatically regarded as a potential spy or "rootless cosmopolitan." The apprehensions toward foreigners inbred in the previous two decades would slowly diminish.

Olga Brezhko was born on a farm in Saskatchewan, Canada in 1940, two years after her parents, like the Watts family, left the poverty-stricken western Ukraine with thousands of other farmers. For these immigrants, buying a farm in Canada with their hard-earned money represented the ultimate success. Olga's parents worked assiduously for five years to try to keep their property, but in the end had to sell.

In 1946 they moved to Saint Catherine's, but left for Toronto when Olga was six years old and her sister Nina was ten. By this time the Brezhkos were thinking less about land and more about their daughters' education. They felt the best place for that was in a big city. Mr. Brezhko became a foundry worker while his wife stayed at home with the girls.

Although Olga and her older sister Nina knew their parents came from the Ukraine, understood Ukrainian and Russian, they only began asking questions about the "old country" when their parents got permission from the Soviet government to return home. "This emigration of Russians and Ukrainians from Canada started sometime in the 1950s," recalled Olga. "The main reason why my parents wanted to go back was because they wanted to be in their homeland. My father didn't know anything about Marxism or socialism. He and my mother just wanted to return home."

In Toronto the Brezhkos belonged to the same Ukrainian and Russian clubs as the Watts. Mrs. Brezhko sang in the choir of the Russian federation. Olga also went to the Russian federation, although she did not know a word of Russian. At home her parents spoke to her in Ukrainian, and she and her sister answered in either Ukrainian or English. But the two girls spoke English together. "Even at the club," recalled Olga, "we sang Russian songs but spoke English. I learned the alphabet and could write Ukrainian because of my lessons at the Ukrainian school. I loved listening to my parents speak Ukrainian and

didn't want to ruin it by speaking it myself. So I never spoke Russian or really much Ukrainian before I came to the Soviet Union."

Except for attending Russian and Ukrainian immigrant clubs, the Brezhko sisters grew up as Canadians. They went to school dances, enjoyed cooking from Canadian recipe books, and always celebrated Canadian holidays.

"The decision to move to the Soviet Union was a family decision," said Olga who was then sixteen years old. "I never gave it a second thought. We're leaving? Okay we're leaving. We're going back to the Soviet Union? So what." She only got excited the day they were leaving, when they had a farewell party at the Ukrainian club, and when they saw the ship they were to take. "I thought, 'Oh, the Atlantic Ocean. This is going to be a wonderful trip.' I was excited about that. Otherwise no," said Olga.

When the Brezhkos were planning their trip, Olga recalls seeing a newsreel at the club. It featured a story about a milkmaid. "The kids teased me saying, 'Olga, when you go to the Ukraine you'll be a milkmaid like that woman!'"

A cheerful and optimistic fifteen-year-old Olga Brezhko stepped off the boat in Leningrad in 1955. The Brezhkos had travelled with six other families immigrating to the Soviet Union, but in Leningrad each family went its own way. The Brezhkos headed for the village where her paternal grandfather lived in the Volhynia region of the Ukraine. It was one of the first places to be occupied by the Nazis. All their relatives except for Olga's paternal grandfather and aunt, and a maternal uncle, were killed during the war.

Olga recalled her first impressions of the Ukraine: "I had come from a big city, Toronto, and ended up in a Ukrainian village. I was so used to modern urban living that it was all strange for me at first. Now I go there and I know all the paths in the forest, I know where to gather mushrooms and nuts. But then it was strange to come from a modern city into a forest, a very beautiful forest by the way. And the village itself has changed greatly since then; everything was built anew because it had been destroyed during the war. Now they have paved the roads and beautiful highways. They just had cobblestone roads then. In 1955 we rode in a horse-driven cart. It was exciting though. I liked it. It was interesting because it was all so new to me. My mouth and eyes were wide open."

After a month visiting relatives, the Brezhkos decided to move to a city, and chose Voroshilovgrad because they knew Mr. and Mrs. Watts (the brothers were already away at college) and another family that had come from Canada lived there. They figured it might be easier to settle someplace where they already had friends. But as it turned out they had no trouble making friends there: "When we came we made new friends fast," said Olga. "I had so many friends I didn't know what to do with them all."

All did not go smoothly, though, because Olga and her sister had to cope with a language barrier. They could understand people but could not answer. "It was really frustrating," said Olga. "We wanted to say something but couldn't." Another problem was that they missed the wide variety of fruits and vegetables they had in their daily diet in Canada. However, Olga said that just the first two years were hard in that respect; later the food supply improved.

Because Olga did not have a high school diploma and knew Russian poorly, she went to a Soviet secondary school. Since she had to start in the seventh grade, which is for thirteen-year-olds, she opted to go to a night school with older students who were working in the day and finishing up their education at night. For the first year she did nothing but go to school and study, but the next year she went to work as a laboratory technician at the locomotive plant where her father was already employed. The night school she attended was attached to the factory.

In the laboratory Olga worked with Russians and Ukrainians, and it was there that she began speaking Russian more fluently. Recalling her four years in the laboratory, Olga said: "I got along with everybody well and I found the job really interesting; we tested the various materials used in production."

Olga also found time to belong to the factory's amateur folk dance group. The director, a neighbor of the Brezhkos, suggested that Olga watch one of the rehearsals; maybe she would want to join. Olga was so good she became a soloist with the group, which performed at the factory cultural center, local villages and at workshops during lunch hours. "I could have become a People's Artist,"¹ joked Olga.

¹ The highest official title of recognition in the arts.

However, the factory job itself was not interesting enough to keep Olga there forever. Since childhood she had wanted to be a doctor, a pediatrician. This was her dream. But her school teachers talked her out of going to medical school and persuaded her to study English. "I knew Russian then very badly," she explained. "It was impossible for me to write a good composition in Russian. My teachers felt that if I tried to major in anything else but English I would flunk the entrance exams because I could not express myself the way other Soviets did. I wasn't enthusiastic about the idea but I applied, as they advised, to go to Kharkov University. I started when I was twenty-one."

That was in 1961. Olga outdid the other English majors in the spoken language, but when it came to linguistics and other theoretical courses she was not always at the head of the class. "Another problem," added Olga, "was that I had to speak British English—'How now brown cow,'" she laughed, "and I didn't like the way the teacher taught stylistics. I suppose that was because I didn't like the teacher, I didn't like the subject."

In her fourth year, in 1965, Olga began correspondence courses with the university because she had married and gone with her husband to Kazakhstan. He had been a mining student and his first job after graduation was in faraway Kazakhstan, which is like the high, arid plains between the Rockies and the Sierra Nevada. There she taught English at a secondary school, something she was permitted to do as a student nearing graduation.

Marriage troubles started there when her husband began drinking heavily. She suffered through a year and a half but one fine day told him she was fed up and going home to Voroshilovgrad. Half a year later he was on her doorstep there, his alcohol problem still not solved, so she headed for Kiev, making sure she left no trail behind her.

Chapter Four

DISCOVERING A MISUNDERSTOOD WORLD

Beginning in the late 1950s and continuing into the 1960s, as more North Americans began coming to the Soviet Union as tourists, exchange students, diplomatic personnel, and employees of Western companies doing business with the Soviet Union, the nature of immigration changed. People initially came to the country on a temporary basis, usually with no intention of settling down, but ended up staying either because they married a Soviet citizen and/or because they simply discovered that they liked living here. Usually the decision to move was made after one or more visits, rather than while in the United States or Canada before having even seen the U.S.S.R. And most of these newcomers have retained their U.S. or Canadian citizenship.

I am one such person. I first came to the Soviet Union on a tour in 1965, and began living in Moscow with my Soviet husband and our small son Andrei in August 1969. I came then as a permanent resident, a status which it had taken about a year to attain. However, I was not really prepared for my new life even though I had made two six-week visits to Moscow in the interim (1966 and 1968). Unfortunately, those trips had only given me time to get married. I still knew little about my Muscovite husband and had not experienced much of everyday Soviet-style living. And my husband had never visited me and our son in San Francisco.

The result was a disastrous marriage from the first day I arrived. Not only did we discover how little we understood each other in general, we also found we had totally different approaches to child rearing. It was one thing to expound on love, marriage and children theoretically in letters, and quite another to deal with real life situations. The problem was that we were not well matched as individuals, and this was exacerbated by our sharp cultural differences.

Thus, my whole period of adjustment to life in the Soviet Union was heavily colored by a miserable family life. Almost every day I told myself I would pack up the next day and go home. But a stubborn personality and inability to accept failure kept me in Moscow and with my husband for two and a half years. Another reason I tried so hard was that throughout my childhood I had always pitied my friends whose parents were divorced. I desperately wanted to prevent my own child from living in a broken home. So I struggled, but unsuccessfully.

Meanwhile, I was learning Russian. My husband, who had learned fluent English at college, insisted I speak only Russian with him. I remember crying out of frustration when he pretended not to understand my English. To say the least, it was bad for communication between two people who understood each other so little as it was, but it certainly helped me learn Russian quickly. My husband also frowned on my speaking English to Andrei, so Andrei and I practiced Russian together. Whatever the two-year-old picked up at the childcare center, I also learned. At work (I was an English-language typist at Novosti Press Agency), I learned to speak fairly correct Russian from a young woman my age with whom I became quite close. Learning Russian with my husband was painful, but talking to her was a pleasure because we liked each other so much. She corrected every grammatical error I made in such a natural and friendly way.

I became familiar with shopping, medical care, childcare, and other everyday services, in about the same way some children are taught to swim by being thrown into the water. My husband and his relatives gave me brief introductions to Soviet procedures in each of these areas, that is, showed me the water, and then threw me in to figure out what to do next. By the end of my first year I felt I could maneuver my way through any situation in any sphere of Soviet life.

I had heard of a few other women and men from North America, who, like myself, had fallen in love with Soviets and had opted to stay with their spouses in the Soviet Union in the 1960s. But the only one I knew personally was Sara Harris¹ from New York. She was an economics student at Moscow University,

¹ Known as Sara Kamenshchikova to the Radio Moscow listeners of her programs about Soviet life.

happily married to a Soviet journalist, Alexander Kamenshchikov, and they had a son who was the same age as mine, and also named Andrei. Sara and I became close friends. Having gone through many of the same adjustment problems two years before, she guided me through numerous rough spots.

Although I was actually adjusting quite well to Soviet lifestyle and making many friends, I was not aware of it because I was so miserable in a marriage that just was not working. In a last, desperate attempt to build a family, we decided to have another child. Our daughter was born in October 1971 prematurely and survived only a few days. To recover from the trauma of losing a much-wanted child, I decided to try having another one. When I became pregnant again, my husband informed me he could not help me enough with Andrei and the housework to prevent another premature birth and urged me to go home to my parents; we would see how we felt about each other after the separation. The thought of going home to familiar ground brought relief; I was extremely tired of being an immigrant.

I was aware then that the chances were great that my marriage would not last, and that I would have to raise two children without their father. Somehow the prospect of raising two children alone was much more appealing than the idea of having only one. Three people seemed like a family; two did not. Feeling secure in my decision to go ahead and have a second child, whether I would return to my husband or not, I left for San Francisco with my mind totally focused on giving birth to a healthy child.

Once Gregory was born in September 1972, an even bigger and healthier boy than his brother had been at birth, I could start doing something about the future. A month before Gregory was born my husband and I decided we would divorce; I finally accepted my failure. I was happy to be at home with my parents, older brother and friends, and in my own environment.

However, I soon began feeling trapped. My only work skills were secretarial. The income I received from such employment was not enough to rent decent housing, pay for a babysitter and still go to college, a dream I had deferred already for too many years. I managed to enroll at San Francisco State University, where I could handle no more than two courses a semester because I was working full time. And our standard of living was

quite low—whatever I was earning was being used for bare necessities.

Gradually I noticed I was missing the Soviet Union and all the social benefits I had left behind—free medical care for minor as well as major health problems, free higher education, very inexpensive childcare centers whose quality was far superior to the most expensive childcare available in the United States, and extremely low-rent housing. In addition, I found myself homesick in general for the Soviet Union. I missed the wonderful friends I had made, the rich cultural life, speaking Russian and relating to people in a “Russian” way. The extent to which I had become attached to the Soviet way of life in the tumultuous two and a half years I had lived in Moscow was clear to me only after I was able to evaluate it all at a distance and in comparison to my native environment.

Looking back on my experiences in Moscow in the late 1960s, I now remember that people were optimistic about their lives. The sacrifices they had had to make during the war and in the postwar years were no longer fresh memories. In the early 1960s, people in the big cities who had small apartments began moving into larger ones, and many who had lived in shared households received their own apartments. Refrigerators, TVs, washing machines and other commodities that had previously been luxury items were becoming readily available. People still wanted much more, but there was a general feeling of well-being and confidence that life was getting better all the time. Relations with the United States and other Western countries were increasingly improving, so the issues of war and peace were not uppermost on people’s minds. I suppose it was also that optimism of the Soviet people in those days that called me back.

In January 1975, at the age of twenty-eight, I returned to the Soviet Union with my children. I planned to earn a good income as an English-language translator, a skill in the U.S.S.R. that commands an income double the average¹, which was perfect for me as a single parent. I hoped to be able to attend evening courses at Moscow University, graduating in six instead of the five years it takes as a day student. I knew Gregory, then two years old, would be able to go to a 24-hour childcare center,

¹ At that time an average monthly income was around 160 rubles, about 180 dollars.

Andrei would go to school and then be looked after in an extended day program, and both of them would get a solid, basic education in rigorous Soviet schools. I expected to live in a decent apartment with rent and utilities costing under ten rubles a month. I was confident that my boys would not be exposed to pornography on corner newsstands, or to drugs in the schools, and none of us would have to worry about crime.

I also knew that I would always be an alien in the Soviet Union. I knew I would not be able to relate to my Russian friends the same way as to American friends, and that this would cause some inner tension. There is a psychology behind language; speech and even body language very often determine a relationship. The way of relating is simply different in the two countries. Another aspect of feeling alien in the Soviet Union would be due to the Stalin-era legacy—many people would be cautious about associating too closely with foreigners, guided by the philosophy of “you never know.”

I knew I would have certain advantages over Soviet citizens (no travel restrictions abroad, the right to use foreign currency stores where goods in scarce supply are readily available), but there would be disadvantages too—not being able to travel to cities in the U.S.S.R. off Intourist's route and without prior permission, and not having job opportunities other than those which required English-language skills.

I would not always get “service with a smile” in Soviet stores, where clerks are sometimes unhelpful and even rude, irrespective of whether they are serving a Soviet customer or a foreigner. We would have to learn to live with certain consumer shortages and a time-consuming shopping system. Some bureaucratic procedures would try my patience. And I would miss my parents, brother and friends.

However, I thought the advantages outweighed the disadvantages. Having full knowledge of what I was getting myself into this time, I felt sure my family would be happy in our new home. Even though detente was shaky and deteriorated in a few years, the number of other North Americans deciding to settle in the Soviet Union was about to increase. They would not think of themselves as traitors to the United States, as many Soviets think of their own people who want to emigrate. When I discussed this with one of my professors at Moscow University she explained that Soviet emigres are turning their back on the so-

cialist experiment, that this is unacceptable to their compatriots who believe in the ideals of the revolution and who feel everyone's skills are needed, especially if they have been given a free education by the state. Americans and Canadians, on the other hand, live all over the world and do not think it is an affront to their country to live elsewhere. That is the attitude of the people in the following stories.

Tracy Kuehn was born in 1951 in Indiana but grew up in Florida. She was the oldest of five children in a family of German, Spanish and English origins. Her father was a construction worker who eventually became a general contractor and her mother was a housewife. Life changed radically for Tracy at the age of eleven when her father left the family; the youngest child at that time was a mere two years old. Suddenly her mother was faced with being the family breadwinner. Initially she worked as an information operator at the telephone company but ultimately was promoted to an administrator. Mr. Kuehn kept in touch with his children and paid child support, but it was his wife who housed, clothed and fed the family.

"We had a decent income until my father left," said Tracy. "Then of course it was difficult on my mother's minimum wage salary to support five kids. She almost lost the house because she couldn't make payments. The bank took back the car, but a member of the church we belonged to helped us out by giving her a second car he didn't need. We never went hungry, but definitely things were tight. Clothes were hand-me-downs and I, as the oldest child, got clothes from friends who were older and bigger. From the age of twelve I started sewing my own clothes. In general it was a positive experience. It taught us the value of money and just a lot of things kids don't learn about if they grow up in a family without any difficulties."

All the Kuehn children went to work at a young age. Tracy began babysitting for other people at the age of fourteen, and had to look after her own brothers and sisters from the age of eleven when her mother went to work. Her brothers had paper routes, one was employed at McDonald's. And her sisters worked in high school as waitresses and cashiers even though their mother by that time was earning a good salary and her older children were financially independent.

In Tracy's neighborhood there were many large families. At that time working women were less common, so most were one-income families. "I definitely remember being aware in high school that other people had more than we had," said Tracy, "but among my own friends I never felt I was worse off."

Tracy's main athletic interest was swimming. She also sewed and knit, and modelled with clay. The swimming, however, was what helped her stumble into her future career. When she was in the seventh grade, she began volunteer work through the school teaching mentally retarded children how to swim: "I liked working with those children because the kids were really accepting. They liked being in the water and were grateful for my help."

When it came time to graduate from high school, Tracy decided she wanted to go to college, major in psychology and work in some capacity with the mentally retarded. She graduated third in her class. Knowing that her mother would not be able to pay her tuition, she applied for and received a large scholarship from the state of Florida. She was also accepted into a package work/study program from Eckerd College, where she enrolled. She worked for a professor about fifteen hours a week all four years she was in college, and also babysat for professor's children and worked summers.

While Tracy was at college she also continued studying Russian, which she had begun in her last year of high school. Tracy's interest in Russian was aroused when she read Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and was so impressed she decided she'd like to read it in the original. "My high school teacher was a wonderful woman," said Tracy. "She was probably one of the main reasons I kept up my interest in the language. She was a small child when she left Russia at the time of the revolution and told us all about the country. She was an amazing woman, and not at all anti-Soviet. She brought groups of students to the Soviet Union and was a really interesting woman in general. She definitely consolidated the interest I already had."

But during Tracy's first year at college, she studied French, her first foreign language in high school. She could see no practical use for Russian and never dreamed of travelling to the Soviet Union. "But French was boring after the Russian, so in my second year I went back to Russian and studied it for three years. In my first year I also enrolled in a history class that

sounded interesting to me, *Lenin and the Russian Revolution*. So I already began developing this second interest which led to a double major. I graduated with a major in psychology and in Russian studies."

While Tracy was still in college she visited the Soviet Union twice. The first time she went was in 1972 with a tour sponsored by Eisenhower College in New York. It was a tour to Moscow, Leningrad and Rostov-on-Don. "Amazingly enough, when I first went to the Soviet Union I think I was really open-minded, despite all the negative things you read in the American press. I had decided I was just going to look at everything and not try to make comparisons; I would wait to think about it all only when I got home. There were quite a few students on that tour who were extremely negative about the country, like Americans who travel everywhere—if it isn't like it is at home then there's something wrong. But I just thought I'd see what it's like and pass judgment when I got back home. I was amazed at myself that I was as objective as anyone could be under the circumstances."

Tracy found the whole country fascinating and was intrigued with the people she met. So she decided to come back the next winter term, only this time with Vanderbilt College. On these two trips she met ordinary working class Soviets. "Maybe it was because I was in a foreign country," said Tracy trying to explain her fascination with the country. "If I had met those same people in the States they might not have been so interesting but here they were. People just sort of thought a little differently than I did about certain things by virtue of the fact that they had grown up somewhere else."

When Tracy finished college she decided to pursue a career in special education. But first she intended to look for a way to live in the Soviet Union awhile and perfect her Russian. She found work as a nanny for an American diplomat in the U.S.S.R. "I spent a year and a half as a nanny in Moscow, which was seeing the country from a little different perspective. The American foreign community in Moscow sticks pretty much to itself. There was hardly any association with Soviets other than on an official level. I personally wasn't restricted, by I was told by the U.S. Embassy to be careful and not travel alone over long distances. But I continued to meet people any way."

After returning home, Tracy worked several years for the State

of Virginia at an institution for the mentally retarded. Then she moved to New York where she became acquainted with people from the National Council for American-Soviet Friendship and began doing some volunteer work there. For the most part she acted as an interpreter when Soviet guests were hosted in the United States by the National Council.

Because she found living in New York exciting, she got a job there. "But I was beginning to feel the classical burnout you hear about with people who work in sociology or psychology. I wasn't working badly but I wasn't being very creative, either. I felt I needed a rest from retarded children for a while."

Through the National Council in 1980 Tracy had the opportunity to study Russian for ten months at the Pushkin Russian Language Institute in Moscow, which has special classes for foreigners. Her interest in the Soviet Union was still cultural, but she also felt it was important to build bridges between the two countries and for that reason wished to gain better knowledge of the language. "It was because our two countries are considered the two superpowers and are at odds constantly; I had been to the Soviet Union often enough to realize that as far as people were concerned there aren't tremendous differences between us. On some level there had to be contact that was positive and productive, because on the higher levels it wasn't. There wasn't anything I personally could do on an important government level to affect policy, but I could talk to people I knew in the United States. I believe that as more Soviets go to the United States and more Americans come to the Soviet Union, attitudes will change automatically. When people in the U.S. know a little more about Soviet people a lot of the fear will subside."

Tracy was also interested in understanding the Soviet Union's economic and political system. "Growing up in Florida, which is a rather conservative state, you either didn't know anything about the Soviet Union or what you knew was terrifying because you heard over and over that it was such a horrible place. I had already seen by being here that that was not the case, but there was a lot I didn't know. So each time I came I filled in a few more of the holes."

Around the middle of the academic year at the Pushkin Russian Language Institute in Moscow, Tracy met a young actor named Georgy Gorbachev (no relation to the C.P.S.U. General Secretary) at his theater, but got to know him better at a party:

"It was attraction at first sight, if not love at first sight. He was handsome, but he was also extremely polite and attentive. He ran around making sure I had something to drink and eat. He pulled out my chair. He managed to speak with everyone. I was impressed by this very thoughtful person. He told me he was a stage actor and invited me to come to a rehearsal, which was very intriguing. While I was there he was solicitous, making sure that I had a good place to sit, and talking to me about the rehearsal afterwards. Those were initially the things that attracted me."

When Tracy's first year of study was over she and Georgy had grown quite close, but each accepted the fact that the relationship would end. However, Tracy came back the next year to further improve her Russian; she had plans for several interesting programs for the New York National Council for American-Soviet Friendship and thought she could benefit from more study. She still intended to return to her career with the profoundly mentally retarded and make Russian her extracurricular work.

But the best laid plans can go astray. Toward the end of the first semester that year, she and Georgy realized they were not going to be able to say goodbye when June came. "I knew the decision was mine," said Tracy, "because we didn't really consider going to live in the States: Georgy could not give up his acting career or leave his elderly parents. The question was, could I live here? It wasn't even the technicalities of finding a job. It was a question of adjustment."

Tracy sat down and did a lot of soul-searching. Her final answer was, yes; she could adjust and in some ways already had. It had been a gradual process that occurred during her many trips to the Soviet Union and several protracted stays. Recalling how she made her final decision to marry Georgy, Tracy explained: "The idea of staying here actually intrigued me. I try not to look at things in my life as permanent. And so I didn't think about living here as necessarily permanent, but as being a way to stay here for a longer period and learn more. I looked at it as a challenge, another interesting aspect of my life."

Once that decision was made the next step for Tracy was to find a job that would make it possible for her to obtain a two-year visa to stay in Moscow. The alternative was to return to the United States when her studies visa expired and from there apply for permanent residency in the Soviet Union as Georgy's wife. (That status cannot be applied for from within the Soviet

Union.) The idea of being separated for at least six months and the possibility of a refusal were not appealing, so Tracy began to look in earnest for work with a Soviet organization.

However, citizens of other countries have limited job opportunities in the Soviet Union. The only openings available are at the publishing houses that translate books into foreign languages, Novosti Press Agency and Radio Moscow, which also need translators and style editors. Tracy would have naturally preferred to work in her field, with mentally retarded children, but that was out of the question; the only jobs with Soviet organizations open to foreigners are in translating; exceptions are rare.

Tracy applied for a job as a translator from Russian into English at Progress Publishers, which prints non-fiction, and Raduga Publishers, which publishes fiction. In both cases she handed in a sample translation for consideration. Raduga was the first to offer her employment and she readily agreed to the job.

Tracy signed a two-year contract with the publishing house which provided her with an apartment and enabled her to use the free health system, childcare and educational system the same as Soviet citizens. The contract also gave her the right to all the other social insurance benefits provided to every Soviet citizen, such as sick leave pay for the entire term of an illness and paid maternity leave for a year and a half. Another attractive clause in the contract was a round trip ticket home for her whole family between the end of the first contract and the beginning of the next if she should choose to continue working in the Soviet Union. Otherwise, the publishing house would pay her way home. As her salary, she would be paid the same rate as a Soviet citizen for the same work. But as a U.S. citizen, she could convert up to one hundred rubles of her salary into dollars to be sent to her bank account in the United States.

Tracy and Georgy applied for a marriage license in February 1982. Before the ceremony Tracy needed to have her passport officially translated into Russian and obtain a paper from her institute confirming that she was a student there, and a certificate from the U.S. Embassy saying that she was not married; her fiancé had to gather a number of official documents for the marriage bureau. Finally, the wedding was set for March 12, 1982. After Tracy was hired at Raduga, she was given a one-bedroom apartment in a quiet, pleasant neighborhood not more than a ten-minute subway ride from downtown Moscow.

Here is what Tracy recalls about her first year as a Moscow resident: "The first year I thought a lot about friends in the States. I think this is pretty normal. I also didn't think about life here in permanent terms. But the longer I was here the easier it became. I felt as though things were becoming more familiar and I fit in a little better. I became more comfortable with things in general. Actually my biggest adjustment problems weren't so much societal, but my work and being home all the time, because that's where translators here do their work. If I had a choice, and I don't, because as a foreigner my options are limited, I probably wouldn't work as a translator. I miss the work I did in the States. I don't feel that same satisfaction with translating as I had working with profoundly retarded children."

After that first year, Tracy took her husband to the United States for a visit. He had never been in the U.S. before and she had not been home for two years. The whole trip was exciting to the newlyweds. They travelled along the east coast of the United States, and Georgy met many interesting people, including, of course, Tracy's family. The experience gave him a better understanding of the culture his wife had come from, aside from being educational.

"We were there for almost two months," said Tracy. "When we came back to Moscow I remember feeling like I had come home. We had a real good vacation, but I felt ready to leave the United States after seven weeks. I felt it was time to get back to normal life. Maybe that was the first time I realized consciously that the adjustment had taken place."

Patty Montet was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in 1952. Her father worked for the U.S. Post Office and her mother was an ex-school teacher turned homemaker who raised seven children. Although Patty was a good student in high school, when she graduated at the age of eighteen the only thing she really wanted to do was get married. "I almost hate to admit it," she laughed, "but I wanted to get out of the house, get away from my big family. I was one of five girls and we all shared the same bedroom. I wanted some privacy, but there wasn't anyone asking me to marry him when I got out of high school, so I decided to go on to college."

The college she chose was Louisiana State University (L.S.U.), which was financially within her means. She moved out of her parents' house, got an apartment with a friend and relished her new freedom. Unsure of career choice, Patty majored in different fields before she settled on Russian. She was good at languages and had done well at German and Spanish. But she did not want to major in either of these languages. She did not feel that they afforded much in the way of job opportunities. But Russian was a different matter: "I thought, now that might be interesting. Maybe I could get a job working for the government. I knew nothing at all about Russia, but I was sure I could learn the language and it was a marketable skill."

Patty studied Russian for three years with a handful of other students in the university's small Slavic language department. Her teacher, a Russian woman who had grown up in Poland, took a liking to Patty and urged her to apply for the Russian Master's Degree program at the State University of New York (S.U.N.Y.) in Albany. That was in 1978.

Patty liked the intellectual stimulation of going to school but had second thoughts about extending her college years. She had been studying at L.S.U. for eight years and was ready for a career: "I liked the university but was tired of being a student,

working for student wages, living in student campus apartments and eating at McDonald's. I wasn't thinking about getting married. I was twenty-six at the time and thought I'd marry by the age of thirty. So I went to Albany because I didn't have anything better to do, which is the story of my life."

Patty immediately hated Albany. She had lived in Baton Rouge all her life and now, here she was, a Southerner in Yankee territory. Also, it was unnerving for her to discover that most of the other grad students knew more Russian than she. Many had been studying the language since they were in high school and had visited the Soviet Union. "I was surprised to find out they had been able to come over here," she recalled. "I didn't think anyone travelled to the Soviet Union."

Since Patty had only taken Russian language courses at Louisiana State University, she did not know much about the country itself. "I was appallingly ignorant," she admitted. "All the other students had taken Russian area studies. But I only knew that the Soviet Union had a Communist government and was a big country."

During her first semester of study, Patty learned about the S.U.N.Y. exchange program with Moscow University. At first, she was not even interested in it; all she wanted at that point was to get out of school, find a job and start making a living. But everybody was vying to be chosen for the exchange program, and Patty soon got caught up in the excitement. But she was also puzzled:

"I couldn't understand why all these people who had been to the Soviet Union before, the students and the professors, were all crazy about getting back. They were clawing to get over, yet they made all these derogatory statements about the Soviet Union, about the people, about the life there. So I couldn't understand why they wanted to return. I myself didn't have any negative feelings about the country. I just hadn't thought much about it."

In January 1979 Patty was accepted on the exchange program. She was excited about the prospect and plunged into practicing her Russian. Several weeks later, a fellow Russian student invited her to a birthday party being held in a university dorm for two of the Soviet exchange students from Moscow University. Patty thought this would provide an excellent opportunity to practice her Russian and gladly accepted.

"That's when I met my future husband at the dormitory," said Patty with a smile as she recalled meeting geographer Andrei Beryozkin for the first time. "I can't say it was love at first sight. Andrei noticed me when I came in, and sat down beside me. He said he had heard I was going to Moscow on the exchange program. I found him interesting to talk to, and it was exciting to be conversing with a real Russian. He was a very pleasant person and I found him attractive. Around midnight I told Andrei it was time for me to leave. I lived about twenty or thirty minutes away, a pleasant walk. Andrei wouldn't hear of me walking by myself. 'Oh, no,' he said, 'we don't let our girls walk home alone.' I didn't know whether to be offended or flattered. I suppose I was a little of both. Anyway he walked me home and we arranged to meet each other again."

Andrei and Patty saw each other on and off for the next two and a half months, until it was time for him to return to Moscow. "I guess you could say he won me over by taking his time," said Patty. "He didn't rush me. We knew each other a month before he held my hand. It was really nice not to have to fight your way out of bed the first time you meet somebody; I really appreciated that. We started seeing each other more and more, and came to find we shared, among other things, an interest in sports. I taught Andrei how to play tennis and he beat me soundly, six-love. He was going back to the Soviet Union at the end of May, but we would see each other when I arrived in Moscow in September, so we knew it wasn't really goodbye. We would have more time if anything was going to develop. We had deep feelings for each other, but I don't think either of us knew what would happen."

Patty arrived in Moscow in September 1979 to begin her five-month Russian studies program at Moscow University. Andrei showed her around and watched over her. He was the head of the Young Communist League in the geography department, so he spent a lot of time at the university after hours. In October, just before Andrei was to make a trip to the German Democratic Republic for ten days, he and Patty had a serious talk. As Patty recalls, the conversation went something like this:

"What's going to happen?" asked Patty.

"I can't imagine this isn't going to have a happy ending," was his reply.

"Well, we don't have a lot of time left."

"I'm going to the German Democratic Republic for ten days; we'll both think this over and talk when I come back."

When Andrei returned, the couple went outside the university and sat on a bench. Andrei started off by saying, "You know there will be a lot of difficulties? I don't know what kind of work you'll be able to find as a foreigner here, but do you want to try?"

"I guess I said yes," said Patty smiling. "I remember being there and sitting on the bench, and I remember certain things verbatim that he said, but I don't remember what I said. I guess I just sort of listened to him. He turned to me and asked: 'So, will we become husband and wife?' I said yes. And that was the start of all our problems."

As Patty told me, she still knew really very little about life in the Soviet Union, but she already had some first impressions: "I suppose what struck me most was the service sphere, the rudeness in the shops sometimes, and so much more rigidity."

Patty went on to explain: "I didn't really know what it would be like living here. I tend to jump into things without giving them serious thought. Maybe it was all for the best because I probably wouldn't have been here if I had really thought about it. It just sort of all happened. I loved Andrei, but more than that, I thought he would take care of me, that he would be a good husband, a good father. That was more important to me. I felt safe with him. It didn't even dawn on me how different my life would be. I just didn't think I would meet anyone else who would make a better husband."

Patty and Andrei ran into difficulties when they tried to get permission to marry: "Before we could even set the date for the wedding the marriage bureau required an official certificate from the university stating I was a student. But I was put off with excuses for six weeks. I received the certificate only when it was certain that my visa would expire before we could get married. Andrei was a member of the Communist Party and was a Young Communist League leader at the university. The university called his parents to inform them that their son was making plans to marry an American. Andrei had not yet spoken with his family about the subject. That night his father threatened to disown him, and his mother fainted. It was very unpleasant."

"When we finally got the certificate from the university, the marriage bureau set our wedding date for March 11, 1980, but my visa would expire at the end of January and we could not

get the date changed. When I left the Soviet Union, Andrei thought we might never see each other again. By this time I was five months pregnant and understandably worried. But I remained optimistic; I was sure I was coming back. In New York, before I changed planes to fly to Louisiana, I signed up for a tour that would be in Moscow the day my wedding was scheduled. That was really lucky. I came back on March 9 and was married on March 11."

Six weeks later Patty left Moscow to give birth to her child in the United States. She also wanted to apply for permanent residency in Moscow. She thought then she was leaving for a few months, but it would be nearly two years before she saw her husband again.

Six months after applying for permanent residency in the Soviet Union she was refused. According to the rules, after a visa refusal one must wait six months before reapplying. Patty's next step was to apply for a three-month visitors' visa that would give her enough time to look for a job that would give her residency rights. She also thought a visitors' visa might be easier to get.

"All the while I was waiting, I was sure I'd get back," recalled Patty. "But after a year and a half had passed and I was even refused a tourist visa, I began to worry. The vice-consul at the Soviet Embassy in Washington told me my way to the Soviet Union was barred. Of course he didn't know what he was talking about, but I didn't know that then. I wrote to Andrei, suggesting he come to the United States. I also told him I would understand if he felt he couldn't leave his country. I began making plans to get some training in a health-related field so I could get a job. I even started looking around for an apartment."

Soon after she had lost all hope of returning to Moscow, Patty got word from the Soviet Embassy that her visitors' visa had been granted. I asked Patty how she looked at that trying period in retrospect: "I'm not really bitter about it. Things like that are bound to happen when you're dealing with a bureaucracy. And we were so naive; we should have tried to get some more information. Americans and other foreigners who had previously married Soviets could have told us from the beginning that permanent residency visas were virtually impossible to obtain. But we didn't know such people at that time; we didn't know to whom to turn. I suppose I carry the biggest grudge against the person who advised us to apply for a permanent visa. He should have

warned us it wasn't very likely to be granted. That was what wasted so much of our time."

Finally, on January 25, 1982, one year and eight months after she had left Moscow, Patty and Andrei were reunited. Andrei saw his son, Nikita, now a year and a half old, for the first time.

Knowing she had less than three months to find a way to stay in the Soviet Union, Patty went job hunting straight away. She applied for a position as a translator at Progress Publishers. Like Tracy Kuehn, she did a trial translation from Russian into English, and in March, Progress Publishers called her to say she could come in to sign a two-year contract.

Although Patty was fortunate in being able to find a job and settle her visa problems so quickly once she was in Moscow, she had other difficulties—adjusting to life in the Soviet Union. "I was really depressed the first few months because I found out Andrei wasn't a perfect person," said Patty with a laugh. "I began to realize he was a human being, that he had faults. And the cold Moscow winter added to my depression. We were renting an apartment in the same building where Andrei's parents lived. While they helped us with Niki, I wasn't sure I like living in such close proximity to my in-laws. Besides, it was such a big change for me. I was away from my family and didn't know when I was going to be able to go home. Niki adjusted quite easily. But I was crying all the time those first few months. Things started looking up in the spring when I got the job and we moved into the bigger, nicer, two-bedroom apartment Progress Publishers provided us. We lived close enough to Andrei's parents to take advantage of their babysitting services, but we had our own space, our privacy."

In the summer of 1982, Andrei, Niki and Patty, who was now pregnant with her second child, visited her family in Baton Rouge. They had a wonderful time, but when the six-week stay was up, they were all anxious to go back to Moscow. "That was the first time I realized—this is where my home is," explained Patty.

Tom Crane was always the new kid in school. His father's managerial position with Sears kept the family moving from one town to another. Four years was the longest time they stayed in one place. "I was always in the process of adjusting," recalled Tom. "I felt different. I don't know if I was in fact different; maybe lots of kids think that. But I think that because I went through long periods of time without having friends, this made me lonely."

Born in 1953 in Delaware, Tom lived in many states on the East Coast, including Pennsylvania, Connecticut and New Jersey. The family income kept Tom and his older brother and sister safely in the middle class, but they were not spoiled with teen-age luxuries. The place where Tom was happiest was in Gillette, a small town in New Jersey. Even after the family moved away, Tom insisted on going back to finish his last year of high school at a private boarding school for boys. That was in 1971. After graduating, he went straight into college—Goddard in Vermont. "Goddard was a progressive school where no grades were given, I had lots of friends, and I loved it," said Tom, who studied drama there.

It was in college where Tom's political views took firmer shape. Although his father was a registered Republican whose idol was Richard Nixon, Tom had been against the Vietnam War since he was in the seventh grade and supported liberal causes. At college he started doing political theater, and by the time he graduated he had formed a political theater group that he moved with to New York.

The theatrical group was called Blue Star Productions. Based on the "Living Newspaper" of the 1930s, the group satirized political news in the press. The actors worked at regular jobs during the day (Tom worked as a library assistant at Yeshiva University), rehearsed at night and performed on the weekends. Mostly they did street theater, although they did stage performances in a loft they shared.

The group eventually broke up. Tom continued working at Yeshiva University, then drove a taxi for a while. Driving a taxi enabled him to spend more time acting, but Tom found the work exhausting. His next job was in a law firm library. By then he had joined an opera company and was singing, although still making very little money at it. "But it was a very nice period in my life," commented Tom. "I really love opera, singing opera, being on stage and listening to it." That lasted for three years, until Tom became disillusioned with the theater and the possibility of making a living at it. That was in 1982. A friend of his had a job with a tour company (Professional Seminar Consultants) that mainly arranged tours to the Soviet Union, and Tom decided to try working as a tour guide as well.

Tom's interest in the Soviet Union had been aroused in college upon meeting the grandchildren of a Russian immigrant. His new friends knew a lot about Russian history and culture, and the U.S.S.R. Tom recalled: "I had never met anyone who knew anything about the Soviet Union. I had come to the conclusion on my own that the Soviet Union was probably no worse than America. That was where I was at that point, without knowing a whole lot about America or anything about the Soviet Union. These new friends of mine induced me to see Soviet films and read Soviet books. The first book I read was Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don*. I'm sort of romantic by nature, so it appealed to me. I saw films from Cuba, too, and in general, became strongly interested in socialist countries. I knew I would someday come and visit here. But little did I know..."

Professional Seminar Consultants hired Tom in 1982 to lead tours to the Soviet Union. The first group he headed in July of that year was comprised of lawyers. Tom's initial impressions were totally positive: "On my first several trips," recalled Tom, "I thought every Soviet person I met was just wonderful. To talk to anybody Soviet was just a thrill. Now I can't believe I thought that way about any people; it was so simplistic and naive."

Tom was only looking for the good and certainly found it. But as he kept coming back regularly, he began seeing imperfections. As a tour guide, Tom occasionally noticed "black marketeers" hanging around the hotels. And, although these individuals make up a minute section of the population, they are, unfortunately, the "natives" tourists are most likely to meet first.

"I started warning my clients," Tom said, "that just because someone comes up and talks to them on the street they should not automatically trust him or her. I would explain that although basically Soviet people are good and the crime rate is very low, crimes do happen. There are these 'black marketeers' who hang around hotels and quite often want to rip off the tourists."

However, Tom did not find that the tourists he dealt with were angels either. "I never liked being a tour escort," said Tom emphatically. "American tourists are terrible in general. They are demanding and want everything to be like it is at home; if it isn't like home it's bad."

Tom was travelling to the Soviet Union every month for two-week tours between 1982 and 1985. During the three months of the winter, however, he remained at home in New York without work and without money. During those three years he met many Soviet people through mutual friends in New York. They gave him an insight to Soviet life outside the museums. He also thought highly of most of the Intourist guides. "If you don't allow an 'us-against-them' situation, you can become good friends with your Intourist guide," said Tom.

Tom enjoyed his visits to the Soviet Union. But he started feeling pulled between the Soviet Union and the United States. For this reason, he began to think he should perhaps try to forget the Soviet Union and keep his roots in the United States.

In June 1983, a year after he began leading tours to the Soviet Union, Tom arrived with a group of eighty-five nurses. One of the Intourist guides accompanying Tom on the trip to Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kiev and Moscow was Rita Latsinova, a young Muscovite. "Gradually, over the two weeks, Rita and I became closer and closer," recalled Tom. "Halfway through the trip I realized I had rather strong feelings for her and that she shared them. But we never discussed it."

Tom tried his best to put Rita out of his mind and to begin thinking seriously about changing jobs. But a few months after meeting Rita, Tom ran into her again. This time neither of them could hide their affection for one another. He was going off to Central Asia with his group, and she was headed in another direction with her tourists. But they would be in Leningrad at the same time at the end of the trip, and agreed to meet in front of a museum on Nevsky Prospect.

"So I went off to Central Asia," recalled Tom, "and looked

forward to seeing Rita. We met on Nevsky Prospect and within half an hour I told her I loved her and would come here to live with her, since she did not want to move to the United States. Then I went back home and thought it over," Tom laughed as he recalled the moment that ignited a torturous period in which he had to decide between living in the United States or in the Soviet Union.

The decision Tom made at home was to find another job in New York and forget about ever returning to the Soviet Union. "It was the coward's way out; I admit it. I'm even ashamed of it, but I was just so overwhelmed by the prospect. I knew what I wanted, but I was just scared to death."

Though the decision was a difficult one, Tom confided that from his very first trip he was attracted to the idea of living in the Soviet Union. Here is how he explained it:

"It was something about the people. It seemed like something I was always missing—the social caring among the people and the friends one develops here. I have very good friends in the United States, but there is something more to relationships here. A lot of this feeling has to do with my family, which wasn't the closest. I was always lacking what I found in the Soviet Union, and not just among my friends. I liked the way total strangers felt free to give unsolicited advice or assistance, though it can be obnoxious sometimes."

Tom was referring to the way in which total strangers feel free in public to give unsolicited advice or assistance, and even to scold. I have experienced this many times myself. If one of my obstinate toddlers would start to fuss after a long day downtown, some calm stranger would inevitably step in and influence the child to behave. If I looked lost or unable to cope with a problem, someone would always volunteer a word of friendly advice. On the other hand, there were times when I did not want to follow the advice. Sometimes strangers tell you off for doing "what's not done." Foreigners unwittingly do many "no-nos" until they get the hang of things, and they may not always appreciate the straightforward way the local people let them know about it.

Tom's attitudes to the people were also influenced by the Soviet Union's history, especially during World War II. "I'm very moved by everything the Soviet people went through then," he explained. "It really touches something inside of me I have mem-

ories, even from when I was three or four years old, of watching a TV documentary film about the siege of Leningrad. These people had suffered so much; the Soviet people were in the right and triumphed—they beat the evil of fascism. So all these things affected me, and the fact that the war is so well remembered. I was with friends once in Moscow, people my age, listening to the stereo while the TV was on without the sound when suddenly someone said, 'Look, look.' It was a story about some war veterans meeting and they were crying. I turned around and saw my friends were crying, too. I was so impressed by this."

Frightened by the prospect of marrying Rita and living in the Soviet Union, Tom made a determined effort to find another job. But as fate would have it, he failed; he came close to getting two jobs, but in the end did not succeed. Meanwhile he was scheduled to lead more tours. "I knew that if I went back to the Soviet Union and saw Rita again, I would marry her."

Tom returned to the Soviet Union in February 1985. The couple went to the marriage bureau to set a wedding date and the ceremony was scheduled for May 24. It seemed like too long to wait so they asked for an earlier date. They were told to come back in a week. They did, and the wedding was moved up to the day of their choice, March 30, when Tom would be back in Moscow with another tour. "People have said this is unheard of," Tom commented about the wedding being scheduled only one month after applying. "Who do you know?" they asked. "What contacts do you have?" But really, I think it was just that they liked us, or we were just lucky with the individuals in charge at the time."

On March 29, Tom announced to the nurses whom he was ushering around the Soviet Union that the next day he was getting married. "You should have seen them," smiled Tom. "They went crazy, they were so excited at the idea of me marrying a Russian. The day after our marriage I left Rita and went down to the Caucasus with my group, then back to the States."

When Tom returned to Moscow in December he was relieved: "It felt good because I was finally settling down and because I was finally with my wife." However, as often as he had been in the Soviet Union in the previous three years, he found that being a tourist and living in Moscow were two different things, and not all his emotions were happy ones.

PART II

WHERE THEY ARE TODAY

Anna Preikshas

In 1987 Anna Preikshas celebrated her sixty-fifth anniversary of living in the Soviet Union. She is the only individual I know personally whose history in this country goes back so far. On August 28, 1985, Anna wrote to me for the first time in response to my inquiry about the Kuzbas colony in Kemerovo and the possibility of interviewing her for this book. In her friendly reply, she commented on how she views her life today:

"I am seventy-five now and have outlived all my relatives and close friends of the past. My health is failing day by day, but I am happy to be with my two children, four grandchildren and five great-grandchildren, and I am trying to do my best to be still useful to my big family and our Soviet society as well. For many years I have been a link between the former colonists who returned to the U.S.A., and the archives and museums of Kemerovo. I have done my best to preserve the memory of the warm and close relationship between the peoples of both our countries."

In 1922 Kemerovo was little more than a village. Today it is a major industrial city with a population of about 500,000, and it has not forgotten the Americans who helped build it up from scratch. Ask anyone in Kemerovo about the colony, and he will know at least something of the history because all the schools in the area have the subject in their curricula, and the media present frequent articles and programs about the colony.

Lyubov Skorik, a short story writer I met in Kemerovo, described the period of the colony as an emotional page in Siberia's history: "You cannot be indifferent when you find out that people from thousands and thousands of miles away, from another country, came to this place, then in ruins, to use their knowledge, strength and hearts to help us make a new life, to bring us closer to our dreams."

Skorik went on to relate that the people of Kemerovo feel a special friendship toward the American people because of the colony. She has travelled to twenty-six countries, but to her great regret she has never been to the United States. However, she once visited Belgium with other tourists from Kemerovo; since some of the colony members had come from Belgium, she and the others, when crossing the border into Belgium, realized they felt somehow closer to it than the other countries they had visited. Skorik explained:

"This feeling of being related is common to many of us. One cannot help but think that in those very difficult days, if people from different countries were able to somehow find a common language, then why can't we today? This conclusion is so obvious: now when we have forged half a century ahead, when we have gone into space, into the depths of the ocean, we have lost the breadth of vision of those days, this ability to join together and work together. Naturally the people of Kuzbas are deeply grateful to, have great respect for, and I'd even say love the American people because of this part of our history. Why shouldn't we today show the world once again that we can reach out to each other and become real friends, and have others follow us? The example set by Kuzbas is truly instructive in this respect."

Yevgenia Krivosheeva, the Soviet Union's Kuzbas colony historian, said that a good indication of local interest in the colony was that her book on the subject, *The Riddle of Ernita*, was sold out in three days in 1979. "We have faith," she said, "that the American people today must also want good relations with us if, in those days, when there weren't even diplomatic relations between our two countries, so many Americans responded to the call to help out regardless of the primitive and hard conditions here. We view that effort as part of the larger effort of improving relations."

Alexei Zelenin, a history student at Kemerovo University and a specialist in the economic history of Kuzbas, grew up in a house built by the Americans and his father worked at the chemical plant that was put into operation under American supervision in the mid-1920s. He was twenty years old when I was in Kemerovo, and I was the first American he had ever met. I was particularly impressed by an idea Zelenin voiced for reviving Soviet-American relations Kemerovo-style. "I think the best area of cooperation would be in construction work," said the young man

who happens to be one of the local organizers of college student groups that work on summer construction projects. "We're now building a sports complex where one of the participating groups is from the German Democratic Republic. We're also building a hotel and a shopping center nearby. So far young people have come to Kemerovo from the German Democratic Republic, but there have been other international student groups working all over the country." Zelenin would welcome a Soviet-American team of summer construction workers in Kemerovo in honor of the past and with hopes for the future.

Getting down to the more mundane, such little things as Mom's apple pie have also remained in Kemerovo's heritage. Vladimir Sukhatsky, a radio reporter in Kemerovo, is hooked on American apple pie. His mother was taught how to bake these pies by her American neighbors. His son, who was five years old in 1985 when I talked to Sukhatsky, already knows what apple pie is, and about the Americans who lived next door and worked in the local coal industry.

Anna Preikshas, who now lives in Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine, celebrates Russian holidays, although she still makes for these occasions apple, lemon and pumpkin pies. When people ask her nationality, she says, "I am an American; I was born in America, my native language is Lithuanian and I am a Soviet citizen, of which I am very proud." After thinking it over for a moment, she laughed and added, "Honestly, it is hard to say just what I am." When I asked her what she thought her life would have been like had she remained in the United States, she responded immediately: "Of course, I would never have been able to work in the occupation I found in the Soviet Union. I received a higher education, my children and grandchildren all have a higher education. In the small mining town where I lived in America, the school had only seven grades. Going to another town to finish high school was unthinkable. Even now West Virginia is considered one of the disaster states."

Anna expressed a common problem of the earliest North American immigrants in the Soviet Union because their parents were immigrants in North America. Having lived in the Soviet Union for at least half a century, the immigrants of the 1930s have developed an interesting mixture of cultures. Anna, for instance, speaks Russian even better than English, but gets more pleasure out of reading English than Russian. And the first language

she learned to speak when a child—Lithuanian—has all but disappeared.

Anna originally moved to Dnepropetrovsk in 1944 soon after it was liberated by the Red Army. She was appointed the head of the foreign languages department of the Chemical-Technological Institute. After receiving her college diploma from the Kharkov Pedagogical Institute (correspondence courses) in 1945 she was transferred to the foreign languages department of Dnepropetrovsk University, where she taught English until her retirement in 1965.

Being a retired senior citizen has not removed Anna entirely from her teaching activities. For a few years she taught English to scientists preparing for research trips abroad. And for two years she ran an English club at Dnepropetrovsk University where the 450 members heard lectures and viewed slide shows presented by researchers who had travelled to Britain and the United States. In 1968 Anna was invited to Kemerovo as a Y.C.L. veteran to attend activities commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Young Communist League. She spoke at schools and colleges about the Y.C.L. and the Kuzbas colony of the 1920s.

Now that she can no longer leave the house because of her poor health, she translates travel pamphlets from Russian into English (the work is brought to her home). She also counsels students doing their final theses and English teachers.

Although Anna is a shut-in, she does not want any help around the house. "My neighbors help me as much as they can, bringing me all that I need," she said. "I have a neighbor on the first floor who is a very good doctor and any time of day or night, whenever I need help, she comes to see about me. I don't want to live with my daughter's family unless I become totally helpless. I have such good neighbors and my personal doctor is here, and I still want to feel independent. My granddaughter sometimes stays with me, and my daughter visits me regularly and brings me things from the store."

Anna does not lack company either. She has many friends who drop in on occasion, some of them former students and others former co-workers. One of the people who looks in on her frequently is a former student from Kemerovo who moved to Dnepropetrovsk.

Anna is often interviewed by reporters about her life story and the history of Kuzbas. The United States, being the land of

her birth, remains a focus of her interests. She reads whatever books are available about the United States and keeps up with the current news on radio and in the newspapers. She also corresponds with a great number of friends she has collected over the years in Hungary, Switzerland, Austria, Canada, the United States, and Kemerovo. The information she obtains in these letters provides her with a broad view of what is happening in the world and what is on people's minds.

Although Anna left the United States sixty-five years ago, she cares a great deal about its affairs. "If the military-industrial complex continues to be as influential as it is now," she said firmly, "things will get very bad. The politicians are puppets of the military-industrial complex that rules the United States. I can't understand how all those millions of people who are out of work stand for all this, and even vote for Reagan, or they don't vote at all. All of them are thinking individually; they aren't united."

Anna has spent most of her life in a society that places a high value on united efforts, and this has naturally shaped her attitudes. When I was looking through the colony archives at the Kemerovo Museum of History, I came across a copy of a letter Anna wrote on June 18, 1969, and sent to the United States to a now-deceased colony member, Ruth Kennell.¹ The letter reads, in part:

"Looking back at the fifty-two years since the birth of the world's first socialist state, I must say that our country has been staunchly moving forward in spite of all the efforts to stop, break down and choke this new state: the intervention, the civil war, the banditry of the White Guards, and pre-revolutionary professionals. Then came those devastating years of the Great Patriotic War, followed by the victory over the mightiest enemy of mankind, the years of rising from the ruins. Now we see the steady advance of our national economy and, with it, the growth of our well-being. I'm proud of having lived here all these years, taken an active part in building up our country and seeing all my father's dream come true."

¹ Author of children's books about Soviet children and also of *Theodore Dreiser and the Soviet Union*, International Publishers, New York, 1969, a book describing the great American writer's trip to the U.S.S.R.

Aini Lehto

Aini Lehto began her life in the Soviet Union in Karelia in 1931, but her work in the political department of the Red Army during the Soviet-Finnish hostilities of 1939-1940 and then World War II eventually took her to Moscow where she lives today. I had heard about Aini from mutual friends who regard her as a hero for serving in the Red Army throughout the war. But this soft-spoken woman talked to me about the events that changed the course of her life in a completely matter-of-fact way.

Along with her two brothers and a sister, Aini served in World War II on the Karelian Front as an office worker, first in Belomorsk, then in Murmansk. Her job was to transcribe and translate enemy broadcasts. In Murmansk, Aini married a Russian soldier, who was later sent to the Far East where he was killed in action in August 1945. The last time Aini saw her husband of a few months, and the father of their yet unborn child, was in Yaroslavl, the transfer point to the Far East. From there she and twelve other people were sent to Germany, right after Victory Day. She first worked in Germany, then in Poland where she gave birth to a daughter in 1945. She was discharged from the army and sent home in December 1946.

At last Aini was on her way back to Karelia. But her infant fell ill and needed hospitalization when they arrived in Moscow. While in Moscow Aini decided to settle down in the capital. Although Aini had lost track of her evacuated elder daughter for about seven months at the beginning of the war, she later managed to locate her and arranged for her to come to Moscow, too.

Aini was hired as a typist at the Foreign Languages Publishing House (now Progress Publishers), where she worked until 1958. The next twenty-two years she spent in Prague, working for the

monthly *World Marxist Review*, first as a typist, then a proof reader, and finally as a translator. "I got bored typing and found proof reading even more boring. What I like best is translating."

Although Aini has been retired since 1979, and has a special pension¹, she still enjoys translating into English part time for Progress Publishers and *Soviet Woman* magazine. "Work is a cure-all for me," she explained.

Her eldest daughter died several years ago of heart trouble, but her youngest daughter is a frequent visitor to the sunny and spacious studio co-op apartment Aini bought in 1970 while she was still living in Prague.

Aini sometimes jokingly calls herself "Madam Cocktail," because of her diverse cultural background—born in America of Finnish parents, youth spent in Karelia, and adult life in Moscow and Prague. "When people ask me what my nationality is after detecting my accent in Russian," exclaimed Aini, "I say I'm Finnish, but after that the explanation becomes complicated. No one should deny his nationality or take any special pride in it. You are what you are."

Ainsi's closest friends are immigrants like herself. "We understand each other better," she said, "because we've had the same experiences. That's only natural."

When I asked Aini to describe her life as an immigrant, she said: "Naturally you lose something, when you go to another country because you are not a native. You can't ever say you're completely a native. I think my daughter feels like a native—this is her home. I don't think I can feel everything as closely as the Russians do because I didn't grow up here. I think that would be natural of anybody who grows up in one country and goes to live in another."

She admitted that the first years she was in the Soviet Union she thought more about the United States, but now she has no longing for it. "I never contemplated going back to the United States. I would like to go for a visit. That would be interesting, but it's too expensive and I have no relatives to invite me. Of course, I'd be interested to see the changes. But I never wanted to go back because I have always felt secure here. I've never gone

¹ Something like being the beneficiary of what is called a "private bill" in the U.S. Congress,

without a place to live, without food, without clothing. I don't have to worry about anything. I couldn't be sure at all if I'd have these things in the United States."

Aini also feels as though she has had an extremely interesting life in this country: "I have had interesting work and have met interesting people. You see so many different peoples and learn so much here. I've had broader opportunities to find out about the world than I would have in the U.S. My horizons are much broader. It's because there's a stress on that in general here. Perhaps I was too young to judge when I left the United States, but that's my impression of the attitudes there. Americans, I think, are more concerned about their own culture, about themselves. Here, there's more of an emphasis on learning about other people, and learning in general."

Hank Siren

Hank Siren was visiting his step brother, Elmer Kari, in Alma Ata, the capital of Kazakhstan, when I met the two ex-American farmers from Minnesota in 1985. They have both lived in Kazakhstan since 1942, when they were evacuated from Petrozavodsk during the war.

Elmer worked on the railroads, and Hank drove a truck. They were on the job twelve and more hours a day, like all the others working on the home front to keep the economy going. Living conditions were poor in the crowded republic that had to shelter so many extra people. Hank lost his mother, wife and two children to hunger and disease during the war. Elmer developed an ulcer which required four serious operations since the war and was the cause of his death at the age of sixty-two, just several months after I met him in Alma Ata.

Life was hard after the war until 1948, according to Hank. Then conditions improved rapidly. Hank remarried and had two children, both of whom have college degrees. As Hank was interested in auto mechanics from childhood, he has been happy with his trade. Though now retired, he still drives a truck and does auto repair jobs, thus drawing both full pay and his pension. In addition, Hank translates articles in his field from English into Russian.

Until his death, Elmer spent a great deal of his time at the country cottage he built in 1967 with his neighbors' help. He would ride the eighteen mile distance on his motorcycle up the winding road lined by dense clusters of fir trees. His greatest pleasure came from tending his large orchard of apple and plum trees, numerous berry bushes and a vegetable garden.

Sometimes myself and other immigrants I know from the United States, where medical expenses can prevent timely health

care (even if a person has good medical insurance), take for granted the free medical care available to everyone in the Soviet Union. After a while it just seems so natural to be able to call an ambulance to the house for any emergency or ask the polyclinic doctor to make a housecall for a common cold, without thinking about the expense. Hank and Elmer, however, never took the Soviet medical system for granted. When I talked to the brothers, one of the first things Hank stressed was that Elmer's life was lengthened by having had four complicated ulcer operations. They were sure they could not have afforded such medical care in the United States.

Elmer is survived by his Finnish wife, who had come to Karelia in 1933, and his three children—Elvi, a doctor in Alma Ata, Eric, a tin smelter in Novosibirsk, and Victor, a railway fitter in Alma Ata. All married Russians, and although they call themselves Finns, they consider their children Russians. In Novosibirsk, Eric's wife would like their children to call themselves Finns, like their father, but Eric sees no point to that if the youngsters do not know Finnish.

While Alma Ata is the capital of an Asian republic that less than a century ago was inhabited largely by the nomad Kazakh people, it is today a city of many nationalities, just as the entire modern republic is a melting pot of nations. Walking down the streets one cannot help but notice the many young Eurasians, the offspring of mixed marriages. The architecture, too, is an aesthetic combination of European and oriental traditions.

Since Elmer first came to Alma Ata, the city's population has doubled, from approximately 500,000 to over one million. Yet, housing conditions are not overcrowded. Increasingly, families are moving into large and more modern housing. This has been made possible by the huge scale of housing construction that has been under way mainly since the 1960s. I found Alma Ata to have all the advantages of a big city, with its rich cultural life, and yet the quaintness and quiet of a neatly-planned small town. It has the same superb location as Denver, with a 15,000-foot peak towering over the city at 3,000 feet. The people seemed to be much more relaxed and friendly than one might expect in such a large industrial and administrative center.

Hank told me that in all the years he and his brother have lived in Kazakhstan no one had ever been hostile to them, either as newcomers from another republic or as ex-Americans. "Nor

have they spoken hostilely about the American people," he added. "All they want is to be left alone by the American military, not to be attacked and not to be forced into an arms race." His suggestion to the international peace movement is that it call a general strike around the world. "The slogans," he said, "should be 'Down With War,' and 'Complete Disarmament.'" He still thinks in terms of the 1930s, when labor in the West was much more militant and internationalist than today.

Elmer believed that the driving force behind U.S. arms policies was the military-industrial complex, which he noted Eisenhower warned of long ago. "I'm sure the American people don't want war, but they can be easily duped into believing the U.S.S.R. is a threat because they know very little about us; we know more about them."

I was grieved to hear about Elmer's death. In the short time I spent in his lovely home in a peaceful and verdant neighborhood just a few miles from downtown Alma Ata, I was struck by his openness and unassuming manner, and most of all by his silent struggle to live and enjoy to the fullest the few years he had left. I could see that almost everything he ate caused him physical pain and that just agreeing to meet me, a stranger prying into his personal life, was a strain on his frail condition. But both he and his brother Hank, being good-hearted, plain folk, wanted to help me get the stories I needed for my book. And I suppose they also wanted Americans to know, from their own story, just a little more about the Soviet Union they had come to appreciate, the country where they made their home.

Bertha Byalek

Before I came to live in Moscow in 1969 I was urged by an American friend who had worked in the Soviet capital for a few years to meet Lily Golden, the daughter of a Black American who had settled in the Soviet Union. Lily knew everything and everyone in Moscow, my friend told me, and everyone knew her. It turned out to be quite an exaggeration, but it was true that Lily was a woman always on the go, always meeting new people and ready at a moment's notice to join in any interesting activities on the cultural, scientific and political scene. So she was a good person to help a newcomer gain an understanding of Moscow's intellectual world. In my case, it was all the more important that Lily could speak fluent English, because at first I knew little Russian.

Soon after I met Lily at a party, she invited me to her home to meet her mother, Bertha Byalek, and her nine-year-old daughter, Helen Hanga. Whereas Lily was outgoing and full of fun, Bertha was reserved and serious, though quite pleasant and hospitable. Lily enjoyed visiting others; Bertha, on the other hand, always felt better on home ground. So it was usually when I was visiting Lily that I got a chance to talk to Bertha and hear the bits and pieces of her long life in the Soviet Union that had begun when her husband, Oliver Golden, brought a group of Black Americans to the cotton fields of Central Asia in 1932. On her bedroom wall hung a large portrait of her deceased husband. Although he had passed away a year before the Nazis attacked the Soviet Union in 1941, his presence was acutely felt in Bertha's home. After all those years it was apparent from the way Bertha talked about him that she still missed him terribly.



Anna Preikshas in her Dnepropetrovsk home in 1985

Aini Lehto posing in Prague





Elmer Kari and Hank Siren in Elmer's home in Alma Ata in 1985, reminiscing about old times



Lily Golden (sitting in middle) entertaining a group of visiting Americans in her Moscow home in 1986

Lily's daughter, Helen Hanga, *Moscow News* reporter taking a break during the International Peace Marathon in Moscow, July 1986





Sally Laakso, seventy, and her husband Vili Bergmen, seventy-four, in a Moscow ice rink where they spend many a winter evening when they are not swimming laps at an outdoor pool



Nick Weinstein and his granddaughter in 1985



Norma Laivo in the Ala-Tau Mountains near Frunze



(Left to right) Väinö Rintala, Celia Nelson (her daughter Roberta is behind her), Impi Vauhkonen, Toivo Kohonen, Impi's and Vaino's son Ernest. A family gathering in Roberta's Moscow apartment in 1986



Celia and Toivo with their daughter Roberta and grandchildren Jane and Kristina



Toini Rodkina in the editorial office of *Soviet Woman* monthly the day she received one of the highest government awards in 1981 in recognition of her hard work



Harry Rapoport of Montreal, Canada, retired English instructor, in his Dnepropetrovsk home in 1985

At the start of the war, Bertha, then living in Tashkent, gave up two rooms in her spacious three-room apartment to two other families. Large numbers of people were evacuated to Tashkent and housing had to be found for everyone, so people volunteered their own living space. No one asked Bertha to do it; she felt it her duty. She did not rent out her extra rooms but gave them to the state, which assigned one room to an Uzbek composer married to a Tatar dentist, and the other room to a Russian woman with two children. Bertha's small family lived in the third room.

The family's Ukrainian nanny, Aunt Nadya, handled all the money and did the shopping and cooking. Bertha worked day and night as an English teacher and translator. She had no time for leisure, although she would sometimes see the Kitels, another American immigrant family that lived in Tashkent, a Georgian co-worker who knew English quite well, and a few other friends. "Every one of these women my mother associated with were extremely hard-working people," said Lily. "Life was tough then."

During the war Lily developed some heart problems; the doctors told Bertha the girl had to eat very well, so her mother always bought food at the farmers' market, which was quite expensive. Bertha sold everything she had brought from America—a sewing machine, and other items, keeping only the typewriter which she used to earn a living. Although Bertha's four brothers in the United States were wealthy, they never sent either money or goods to help out their sister in those difficult years. Other immigrants received assistance from relatives from time to time, but the Byalek brothers never forgave Bertha for marrying a Black and moving to the Soviet Union.

During the war, many people were evacuated to Tashkent from Moscow and Leningrad, especially famous writers and composers. Some of them lived in Bertha's building, which was the tallest structure in Tashkent, four stories high. Thus, Tashkent turned into a thriving cultural center. Lily went to concerts and performances every Sunday. She also took music lessons from an outstanding pianist from Leningrad, and played tennis with the famous Soviet writer and journalist Konstantin Simonov.

Lily developed into an outstanding tennis player, and, after the war, travelled a lot around the Soviet Union with the national tennis team. "I think I was the only child in Tashkent who

travelled anywhere," Lily said as she recalled her childhood and youth so full of rich experiences.

All this time Bertha was working as much as she could to support her family in the early postwar years when rationing was still in force and good food could only be obtained at inflated prices at the farmers' market. In 1948 Bertha transferred from the university to the Institute of Foreign Languages and simultaneously began working for Tashkent Radio's English-language service, where she remained until her retirement in 1961 at the age of fifty-five.

Bertha's work record shows that in 1958 and 1959 she was given certificates of appreciation for outstanding work. She was the only English teacher who was a native speaker, so she was always held in high regard. Every effort was made to persuade her not to retire from the Radio. But she insisted on going to Moscow to help her daughter Lily, by that time a graduate of Moscow University, take care of her newborn daughter, Helen.

Lily had left Tashkent right after graduating from high school in 1952 to attend Moscow University. "During those ten years I lived in Moscow without my mother," said Lily, "I felt her influence even though she had never really brought me up. Aunt Nadya was the one I always turned to for advice because I couldn't get near Mom, she was always working. But I felt her indirect influence strongly. I remember when I lived in the dormitory I never allowed myself to party with the other students; whenever I was tempted, I thought of my mother and how she was working day and night."

Those ten years were difficult for Lily. She had come from what was then the provincial city of Tashkent to the nation's capital. "My pronunciation was provincial," explained Lily. "People corrected me all the time. I lived in the dormitory on a small stipend, plus the little extra money my mother was able to send me. By the way, I never had any debts then like I do now, even though I am a highly-paid scholar. Mother bought the few dresses I had and bought me tickets home to Tashkent two or three times a year. There was a time when I wanted to quit the university and work to help out, but my mother wouldn't let me."

Lily has never had any problem due to her race in the Soviet Union. In Uzbekistan, she said, so many of the people had darker skin than she that no one paid any attention to her.

While she suffered the physical privations of the war and postwar years, she was never excluded from any of the educational, cultural and athletic opportunities available to other Soviet people. She grew up giving no thought to the color of her skin.

Arriving in Moscow, she went through the same emotional and cultural transition as any other Soviet person from an outlying area experiences in adapting to the standards of the capital's intellectual circles. At the same time, she was aware of roots and perhaps had a heightened interest in the homeland of her Black father and white mother, which is why she majored in U.S. history at the university. And when she wrote her doctoral thesis she searched farther back into her roots in Africa, her subject being African music.

In that same period she also married an African statesman in exile, but divorced him just before he left the Soviet Union for home. Lily reasoned, "Equality as a woman, as a Black woman is important to me, and so I did not want to deprive my daughter of the opportunities she would have in the Soviet Union as a woman."

Although it was no easy decision for Lily to make at the time, and the result was that she and Bertha raised her daughter, Helen, without the child's father, she apparently made the right choice. Helen went to a Moscow secondary school with intensive English courses, then majored in journalism at Moscow University, and today is a busy reporter for *Moscow News* weekly, a paper that comes out in several languages, including English.

Today Lily lives in a three-bedroom apartment in the middle of Moscow with her second husband, a Soviet writer, and with Helen, who is still looking for just the right man "who must know more than one foreign language, be cultured and intelligent and, of course, handsome." The stunning, slender Helen, who applies her makeup according to all the rules of *Ebony* magazine, has many suitors but cannot make up her mind. Bertha passed away at the age of 80, after spending the last twenty-five years of her life in Moscow as a translator and grandmother.

Besides working as a researcher at the Institute of Africa affiliated with the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, Lily regularly lectures around the country through *Obshchestvo Znanie* (Knowledge Society) about African art, culture, history and the status of women. Due to her wide travels, she is a veritable gold mine of first-hand information about life in the remotest areas and the

issues most on peoples' minds. Lily is also the author of numerous articles and several books, including one about Africans and Afro-Americans who settled in the Soviet Union.

Everyone who meets this exuberant and articulate scholar cannot help but feel that as a Black woman she has had the opportunity to develop to her full potential in Soviet society, and that she is perfectly content here. This is true for Helen as well, who is just beginning to make a name for herself in the capital's journalist community and among the many English-speaking people she interviews for her newspaper.

I talked to Helen about how she reacts to the many Americans she meets. She wanted to comment separately on Black Americans and her attitudes toward them. "I have a special feeling toward Black Americans, that we are sisters and brothers," she said. "When I meet them I understand them better than white Americans. Perhaps it's in my genes. I do not have that same attitude, however, toward Africans. I feel closer to Europeans than Africans, even though my father was an African. I suppose it is because I know almost nothing about African culture; the Black American heritage in my family was much stronger. Even my mother, who is a scholar on Africa, listens to spirituals and other kinds of Black American music at home, not African music. And she and I can be moved to tears by Black music from America, it has such a big emotional hold on us."

Helen told me about a conversation she had with a Black woman from the United States. They discussed what it was like to be Black in the two different societies. "This woman told me that since childhood she has felt defensive about being Black," said Helen. "It's a defensive reflex she has built up against white people's hostility. She is a wealthy woman who can afford to stay in fancy hotels, but there are some hotels that she will call first for a reservation, rather than show up and be turned away. I have also always been conscious of my Black skin in the Soviet Union, but in a positive way. I have been in situations when people would stare at me and sometimes ask me silly questions like how I wash my Afro hair. But none of these people were ever hostile toward me, just inquisitive, and then even apologized for their curiosity. When this American Black woman talked about her childhood, she talked about hostility, not what I have experienced. Maybe she was exaggerating, but this was how she felt. I don't feel the least bit defensive with people,

even though I know I may be asked silly questions. And in many ways the color of my skin makes me stand out to my advantage. People notice me, want to get to know me."

Helen also said that as the granddaughter of former Americans, she feels an obligation to tell Americans about life in the Soviet Union and, despite the differences between the two cultures, to help discover what human qualities we have in common, to see the best in each other. She also told me what positive qualities she sees in both peoples that could help bring us together:

"Having met many young people from the United States, I have learned that they are inquisitive. I don't mean the kind who are just interested in money, but the best of American youth. Soviets, in turn, have always been internationalists and are eager to make friends with other peoples. These qualities of both peoples make a terrific foundation for friendship."

Sally Laakso

Sally Laakso is one of those exceptional people who is always on the go and is still as strong as ever at the age of seventy-one. She writes newspaper articles for *Neuvosto Karjala* (Soviet Karelia), works as an interpreter for Finnish delegations travelling across the Soviet Union, attends weekly meetings of the retirees of the U.S.S.R. State Committee for Television and Radio, swims laps three evenings a week, gives English lessons to her two grandchildren, keeps tabs on the families of her three adult children, visits and hosts her many friends, and has plenty of time left over to correspond regularly with former Finns and Americans whom she has known since the 1930s.

Sally is a determined and hard-working person. It is this character trait of hers that made it so difficult for her to get used to the easy-going attitude of many workers she saw in the 1930s. During the war this attitude disappeared. "Everyone worked hard," she recalled, "because it was a life-and-death struggle. People understood that the existence of the socialist state was at stake. The country became united. Sloppy work habits came back again after the war. Gorbachev is right to call for more discipline on the job and to clamp down on alcohol-abuse."

When Sally criticizes something in the Soviet Union, she does so because she cares so much about the country. She has every reason to feel that way, having spent the last fifty-five years of her life "doing what I could do best and what would benefit the country most." But aside from that, she is acutely aware of the fact that her father died working for his ideal in Karelia, and that during World War II her brother was killed on the Karelian Front, her sister and sister's children, and Sally's own son Leo died of tuberculosis in Alma Ata while suffering the same privations in evacuation as other Soviet people.

Throughout the trials of war Sally taught English, first at the Kazakhstan foreign languages institute, then at the Institute of

Cinematography that had moved from Moscow to Alma Ata. After the war, Sally rejoined her husband in Moscow and continued working for various organizations as an English teacher and translator. In 1959 she joined the staff of Radio Moscow's foreign service, where she remained as a translator until her retirement in 1971.

She and her husband worked full time while raising three children—Vilja born in 1939, Leonid born in 1946 and Marja born in 1956. Today all three are well-established in their different fields. Vilja teaches Finnish to Intourist guides, Leonid is a journalist at Novosti Press Agency, and Marja is an English language translator at Radio Moscow, like her mother was. All three are college graduates, and all of them speak excellent Finnish, which they learned from their parents, and some English, which they learned at school. Marja is the only exception—Sally spoke mainly English to Marja when she was growing up. Sally is trying to teach her grandchildren to speak good English, too.

Sally and I talked at length about the differences and similarities she has observed in Russians and Americans. She thinks, for instance, that the Russians scold their children more than Americans, but, at the same time, she believes Russians have an enormous love for children, perhaps more than Americans. When she visited the United States in 1981 she noticed that the youngsters were dressed more poorly than the Russian children. "Americans don't cultivate being neat and orderly as Russians do here," she explained.

Sally spotted other differences between Americans and Soviets while she was in the United States. She finds that "Soviets are more generous, broad-minded and sociable, especially when it comes to strangers. TV in the U.S.S.R. is constructive; it cultivates humane qualities rather than violence. In the United States, there is a callous attitude by officialdom to the poor and homeless. Society is to blame for the homeless. Here in the Soviet Union, no matter how great the housing shortage, even in the 1930s, no one was left homeless, and certainly not today. Maybe some houses and apartments here aren't as good as they are in the U.S.A., but everyone has a roof over his head. So this care for the human being is the biggest difference I see. This is a socialist feature seen in all the Soviet republics and among all 130 ethnic groups."

Accessibility to cultural activities is another plus in the Soviet

Union, according to Sally. "Culture in the Soviet Union," she said, "is not for the highbrows. When we lived in the United States our hunger for culture was satisfied only in workers' clubs."

Even though Sally is aware of shortcomings in both cultures, she thinks that there is more reason for us to be friends than enemies. The peoples are similar in that "both are straightforward and have a pioneering spirit." Because she believes that peoples should know more about each other, Sally frequently visits the Friendship House in Moscow, where she is active in the Soviet-Finnish friendship society. For many years she performed in an amateur English-language theater where her daughter Marja now acts in leading roles.

Summing up her philosophy of life, which was reinforced by having survived the most difficult periods in Soviet history, Sally maintained: "In hardship situations you get down to the fundamentals; if the cause is good you have a purpose in life. Here people have that purpose in life because they have confidence the Soviet Union is building for a better world."

Mary and Nick Weinstein

Nick Weinstein was a man whose eyes, smile and conduct told anyone who came into contact with him—"You know, you're all right. I like you." No, he was never gushy or gregarious; he just made you feel really comfortable in his presence. Some people emanate an unmistakable and irresistible warmth, without saying or doing anything in particular. Nick was one of them, and so he had a host of lifelong friends.

When I interviewed Nick, just two months before he died of heart failure, he told me that the first part of the war and the first five years afterwards were the most difficult in his life. "Yet, little things made us happy during the war," he added. "For instance, I remember when a trainload of watermelons arrived in town. It was a terrific luxury. Unfortunately, our son didn't appreciate them. He was afraid to try one because he had never laid eyes on a watermelon. We had to promise to give him candy if he ate a slice. Candy in those days wasn't so easy to come by either."

The tank factory in the Urals that Nick worked for during the war also had its problems with supplies because vast industrial areas were occupied by the Nazis. Thus, superb workmanship and creativity went into designing and building the famous Soviet tanks under those difficult conditions. At Nick's funeral in Moscow, attended by scores of friends he had made over the decades, one of the men he had worked with in the Urals talked about the important contribution Nick made to the war effort with his engineering ingenuity. Nick, it seemed, came up with many a solution to the problems that arose over not always having the proper equipment, tools or material.

After the war, Nick went back to the Ordzhonikidze Machine-Tool Plant in Moscow where he had worked in the 1930s, only he returned as the head of a department. In 1950 someone apparently became uneasy about having a former American on

the staff, so Nick was laid off. This was during the wave of mistrust of immigrants toward the end of the Stalin period.

For twenty days Nick looked for another job. Everyone he knew tried to help him find something else. The situation was particularly pressing because the family had no other income—Mary was a homemaker with two boys to look after. (Their second son was born in 1945). When I asked Nick what kind of emotional turmoil he went through during that period of uncertainty, he responded so nonchalantly that I found it hard to believe. It was as though he could not comprehend what I thought he ought to have worried about. But Mary interrupted at that point saying, “Paula, he’s always been that way. He never fretted about anything. Of course, he was concerned, but he’s never let anything throw him for a loop.”

Finally, one day he went for a job interview a friend had arranged at a designing office, and landed the job. Nick worked there for seven years, designing presses. The work was more interesting than what he had been doing, but the pay was less; so Nick took odd jobs translating technical texts for extra money. Eventually Nick eased out of engineering and into full-time translating.

It was just a matter of time before Nick established himself in Moscow as a leading translator of technical books from Russian into English. He has to his credit the translations of over fifty books, many of which are widely used as textbooks abroad.

I asked Nick if he was satisfied with his career, the fact that he had switched from engineering to translating. He smiled impishly and said with feigned sincerity, “I always wanted to be a ballet dancer.” Mary gave a hearty laugh. His dry sense of humor could catch her off guard, even though she had been with him for so many years.

Until the end of the 1960s, the Weinstains lived in a large apartment with three other families; then they moved into a two-bedroom apartment they could call their own. Mary said they had been good friends with the neighbors in their shared apartment; had no secrets from each other, and never felt they had to lock their doors. In the days when shared housing was common and families could not choose their neighbors, it was not unusual for serious disputes to arise. So I asked Mary how they managed to get along so well with their neighbors.

“First of all it was luck,” replied Mary. “Second, my mother

was very easy to get along with and tried to be friendly. All the other neighbors were related to each other; we were the only outsiders. They were Russians and not the least bit anti-Semitic. We loaned money to each other, even though we all had small incomes. And after the war, when my mother was over eighty and we could never leave her alone, we would sometimes ask the neighbors to look in on her if we wanted to get out of the house and go to the movies."

One of the problems that resulted from living in shared housing was that their children did not learn English. Mary explained, "We didn't want to speak English in front of the neighbors." Nick commented, "It wasn't polite." Mary added: "If we had lived in a separate apartment maybe we would have spoken English. When the children began learning English in school we helped them."

The Weinstens have two grandchildren who go to schools that offer intensive English courses, so they are going to be relatively fluent in the language when they finish. Their older son, who is a chemical plant engineer, reads English books with ease and does interpreting when English-speaking visitors come to his plant. The other son, who designs pharmaceutical plants, was not as motivated to master the language and, in general, is more interested in the cultures and languages of ancient Rome and Greece than that of his parents.

While Nick had an excellent command of English, even though he had been out of an English-speaking environment for decades, he made many grammatical errors in writing and speaking Russian. When Mary told me Nick did not speak Russian correctly after all these years, he replied, "Sometimes I say things right by accident." His philosophy was always to say what you want without worrying about the grammar. This attitude of his may have been one of the reasons why his vocabulary grew so large, to the extent that Nick became a whiz at Russian crossword puzzles. He said he could not do them as well in English because he knew the Russian realia better.

Evaluating their lives in the Soviet Union, Nick said: "We've done quite well for ourselves. Mary and I live in a two-bedroom apartment by ourselves. We have no financial worries. And our children get along fine. When people ask me why I live here and not in the United States I always say this, which is absolutely true: No child ever goes to bed hungry here. I'm sure of that.

In the United States they do. That makes a difference to me."

Mary and Nick visited the United States in 1977 when they were guests of Nick's brother in Los Angeles. They enjoyed the trip thoroughly, the people who knew them were very hospitable and they saw many places they had not previously seen. Mary noticed that one major difference in the area of hospitality was that Americans are more likely to take their guests out to dinner to a nice restaurant, whereas Russians prepare a big feast at home.

"The most striking difference between the way people relate to each other in both countries," said Mary, "is the caution with which Americans regard strangers." Mary spoke with amazement about how people in New York, for instance, seemed reluctant to even give directions. And their friends warned them constantly to be very careful when they ventured out on their own. She was told to hold on to her purse and watch out for criminals.

A question I asked all the ex-Americans was how they responded to meeting either American immigrants like themselves or American visitors to the Soviet Union. The answer was almost invariably the same, that they feel a particular closeness to them. Mary did say, however, that she felt some Americans exhibited an arrogance she could not tolerate, and shared an "ugly American" story with me. It is not a typical story, but it does reveal the kind of superior attitudes that have developed in some Americans because of the constant negative information they receive in the media about the Soviet people.

The incident took place in the Moscow subway sometime in the 1970s. Mary was standing beside two young American men who were offered seats by two Muscovites. In Soviet subways people usually give up their seats to the disabled, the elderly, and children; no one ever stands up for a healthy young person, especially a male. So this was obviously a gesture of friendship to the foreign guests. When the two fortunate young men sat down, one sarcastically remarked to the other that the Russians were so accustomed to their hard life that it did not matter whether they sat or stood. Mary was the only one around who understood them and was furious. She gave them a piece of her mind for being too arrogant to appreciate the hospitality shown them. The men were surprised to hear this woman, who identified herself as a local citizen, speaking English as well as they did.

Unfortunately, too few Americans run into such people as Mary and Nick or other North American immigrants who know the Soviet Union so well, yet who understand their former compatriots too, and can therefore help build a bridge of understanding between the two peoples. Perhaps the Weinstains were not consciously aware of their importance in this respect. But they understood the need to tell their story and for me to locate as many other people as possible like them. Nick gave me the names of several immigrants I did not know, and although he was in physical pain, he graciously agreed to answer my long list of questions. From then on Nick was beset by one illness after another, until finally, two months later, his heart gave out just two days after he had finished translating a large book. When I heard the news I felt as though a very close friend had died. Mary, their children and grandchildren will be quite lonely without him. He was an extremely kind and intelligent person, he thought the best of everyone, and his own life was an open book.

Norma Laivo

I met Norma Laivo in Frunze, the picturesque capital of Kirghizia, in the summer of 1985. She and Sally Laakso had been friends in Karelia and still corresponded. Sally had told me a little about Norma's life in the Soviet Union, but mainly about her seven years in Nazi concentration camps during World War II.

I was eager to meet Norma in the exotic republic of Kirghizia, which I had not previously visited. However, Norma was adamantly against being interviewed. She refuses to be thought of as a hero for surviving Hitler's death camps, and in general thought it was inconsiderate of me to bother "an old and disabled woman," as she put it, just to get her life story. When I told her I wanted not only to hear about her own personal story, but about the Soviet Union and what she thought about living in it all these years she said, "Oh, that's a different matter." When she heard I was from her native San Francisco, that made us friends forever.

In 1986 Norma celebrated her seventieth birthday. What I found most striking about Norma was the wide smile that suddenly flashes across her normally serious face when she is amused, a smile that allows one to zoom back five decades and see her the way she must have been as a young woman, before the war turned her life inside out.

In 1938, when she was visiting Finland, she was put in a jail for women in Häme by fascist authorities. In 1941 she and the other women who had served their time were transferred to a concentration camp, which was located two stories lower. In 1942 Norma was sent with a group of women inmates to Helsinki, then to Tallinn, which at that time was occupied by the Nazis. "We lived there for two years in constant fear that tonight we would be sent to our death at any time," recalled Norma. In September 1944, with Soviet forces only some eight miles from

Tallinn, the prisoners were quickly evacuated by ship across the Baltic Sea to Poland. There Norma was imprisoned in the Stuthof concentration camp. Again the battlelines drew near, and in January 1945 the prisoners were marched north to a former Italian work camp about fifteen miles northwest of Danzig (now Gdansk). On March 21, 1945 the camp was liberated by Soviet troops.

How she survived those seven years of hard labor and deprivations is just as much a mystery to her as to anyone who knows what went on inside those camps. She supposes that one of the main reasons she managed to live through it all was her excellent health and athletic training before the war, as well as the mutual assistance among the inmates. She became very close to one woman, in particular, a Finnish immigrant in the Soviet Union who, like herself, was captured in Finland.

The two women parted ways after their camp was freed: Norma's friend, a nurse, joined the Soviet troops heading for Berlin, while Norma herself was sent back to the Soviet Union with typhoid fever. She fell ill the very day the camp was liberated. She had contracted the disease a few days before after volunteering to help a German nurse treat other typhoid patients in the camp.

Had she come back to the Soviet Union a war veteran and not an ex-concentration camp inmate, Norma would have had a much easier time rebuilding her life in Karelia. But in those days Stalin had set a stigma on such people; if you allowed yourself to be captured by the enemy, you were suspect, regardless of the circumstances. Later, of course, these attitudes changed, but when Norma, at the age of thirty-one, came back to Karelia to pick up the pieces, this was one strike against her.

Another problem was that Norma had no real home to come back to. Her father had died of heart failure in the Komi Autonomous Republic where her parents had been evacuated. Her mother, who had been told in childhood by a Gypsy fortune-teller that she would have no relatives at the end of her life, had long ago resigned herself to her daughter's death, not having heard anything from her since 1938. Norma somehow felt she was no longer necessary to her mother, who seemed to ignore her presence.

Thus, Norma opted to start her life all over again somewhere else. She wanted to do her part in rebuilding the war-devastated country and had heard about the critical need for builders at

major construction sites in the country's East. She decided to try her hand at that. What more direct way was there to rebuild the country! For ten years, until 1957, Norma worked on several major construction projects.

Finally, fortune smiled on Norma. In 1956 she fell in love with one of her co-workers. He was a Russian from the South who had become a migrant construction worker to escape from a bad marriage. He and Norma decided to marry and settle down somewhere. They looked at the map and chose Frunze, and that was where they headed in 1957. Since the city needed construction workers, they were given jobs immediately and a one-bedroom home where Norma still lives today. Frunze turned out to be a good choice because the climate cured the chronic bronchitis she had developed since the war.

When Norma arrived in Frunze the houses were made of clay bricks and had straw roofs. The Kirghiz (nomads before the 1930s) were poorly dressed and uneducated. "Now the Kirghiz have all the best the republic can offer," Norma said. "Education, clothes, good jobs and cars, and they are very proud of their progress. In Karelia the Finns enjoyed the same benefits, and that's only fair. I support the Soviet nationalities policy of giving the native population benefits and having affirmative action programs for them."

Not only Kirghiz live in the republic, who mainly inhabit the countryside. In Frunze, for instance, there are eighty ethnic groups represented. There are even some Czechs whose parents and grandparents came in the 1920s, as did the American immigrants, to build up the local industry.

Although Frunze is over a hundred years old, most of the city was developed only during the 1960s. Other cities had to be founded in Kirghizia, and resources stretched only so far. When Norma and I were riding through the city she pointed out the various hotels and apartment houses she helped build before she retired.

While Norma's life in Frunze has been generally satisfying, she is no stranger to sorrow. She lost a child at five months. It had been sickly from birth, apparently because of Norma's poor health after the concentration camps. And in 1976 Norma's husband died, leaving her without any relatives.

The friends of her youth, the Finnish-Americans who settled in Karelia in the 1930s but who now live in various parts of the

country, correspond with her, and she keeps in touch with some of the Finns she was imprisoned with in the Nazi camps. Norma complained that all her life she has been very shy and it has been hard for her to make new friends, especially as an adult. "If I had taken after my mother, who was outgoing and had lots of friends until her death in 1966, and not my father, who was an introvert, my life might have been quite different."

Although Norma does not have much of a social life, her intellectual and spiritual world is rich. She is an avid reader subscribing to newspapers and reading books in Russian, English and Finnish. She also likes to watch TV and take care of her lovely flower garden, and derives infinite pleasure from listening to music. "I brought my love of flowers and music with me," she said, "from San Francisco."

Before Norma injured her hip a few years ago by falling on an icy sidewalk, she attended the theater regularly, went swimming, and hiked in Kirghizia's gorgeous mountains. Unfortunately, such activities now cause her too much physical pain, but her energetic spirit remains. "Now, the upper part of my body yearns to move, but the bottom half won't," she complained in frustration.

Although Norma has a variety of interests, she regards Soviet-American relations and international affairs in general as particularly important. She feels she has come to understand the Soviet Union thoroughly in the many decades she has lived here and through all her experiences—both good and bad. She does not think the Soviet government or people want confrontation with the United States and blames the military industry in the United States for the abnormal relations and the arms race. She also observes that the American people are doing much to improve relations.

However, she also realizes that the fears of a Soviet threat have deep roots. "Even when I lived in the United States," she recalled, "it was so hard to convince Americans that the Soviet Union is not a place to be feared. Why would our government go over there and take over the United States? We have our own territory. We need workers here, not land. It's silly to even think about it." At this point, Norma told me about a cartoon she remembers seeing in a New York paper before she left the U.S. It was a picture of the Soviet Union enclosed by a huge wall: "To this day I remember that picture and the attempt to show

that the Soviet Union was closed off like a prison. I'm afraid some of those same attitudes persist today."

The last day I was in Frunze, Norma and I went to the Ala-Tau Mountains that overlook the city. She told me how her love for the mountains developed back in the United States where she would frequently climb Mt. Tamalpais, a short distance north of San Francisco. Neither of us that evening was eager to come down from the hills, which somehow reminded us both of where we had spent our childhoods. There we were, two Americans together, two San Franciscans, two human beings far away from home, yet not so far, because we had both learned while living in the Soviet Union how close our countries and our peoples really are.

Impi Vauhkonen

Impi Vauhkonen, like most journalists, is usually asking all the questions. This time she was answering them. I learned from her early on that we share the same trepidation when we pick up the phone to ask someone for an interview even though people are usually pleasant and cooperative. The only difference is that my turf is Moscow and hers is Petrozavodsk.

Impi told me the most satisfying period of her life has been the time she has spent working in *Neuvosto Karjala* (Soviet Karelia). This newspaper comes out in Finnish several times a week and is mainly distributed in Finland, but also in Karelia and other Soviet republics. Impi translates, edits and writes articles for the paper. Her main subjects are music and medicine.

In recognition of her journalistic talent and hard work, Impi has been conferred the title of honored cultural figure of Karelia, receives a special pension and has collected many awards over the years. Because Impi is such an extremely modest person who always feels indebted to others while overlooking her own contributions, she commented on all this official recognition by saying, "I think I have gotten more than I have given. I simply like my work. If I didn't I could have retired long ago." Impi is in her seventies and could have officially retired at the age of fifty-five.

Impi's husband, Väinö Rintala (from the U.S.), is now retired. The one-time Boston conservatory student played the clarinet and saxophone for many decades in the Karelian symphony orchestra. He too has been recognized: twenty-five years ago he was the first member of the orchestra to be given the title of Honored Artist of Karelia.

The war years were the most difficult in Impi's life. She stayed in Belomorsk while her husband frequently travelled around the country with the orchestra of the Karelian Light Opera. When

the couple returned to Petrozavodsk, much had been destroyed by the retreating Finns. The town that was founded in 1703 by Peter the Great around an iron works that supplied armaments to fortify his new capital of St. Petersburg, today has many modern industries, including engineering and the timber industry. The city, which has grown from a population of 27,000 in 1930 to 238,000 in 1980, also boasts many scientific and educational establishments, including a university, a teachers' college and a branch of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences.

What would Impi's life have been like had she remained in Sudbury, Canada? "Perhaps I would be working in some..." Impi did not finish her sentence because she could not imagine what her career opportunities would have been in her small immigrant mining town. "Would I have even had work?" she wondered. "My sister who still lives there has never worked. Her husband was a miner and supported the family himself. Now he's retired and they are getting along okay; they own a home. But they aren't as interested in cultural activities as I am. This I have developed living in the Soviet Union."

Impi has visited relatives in Finland four times in the past twenty years. "I am so used to living here," she said, "that I found it boring to hear Finns talking about taxes and money all the time. In the Soviet Union I think we have less financial cares; we have plenty of money and never have to think about saving for a rainy day or saving up coupons to buy things cheaper."

For two months in 1972 Impi visited her two sisters and brother in Sudbury, Canada. Although the city had spread out in the forty years she had been away, it seemed small compared to the way she had remembered it as a child.

"When I was in Sudbury," she recalled, "it seemed to me that people were by and large not interested in culture. They seemed to be preoccupied with having nice clothes and a nice home. I'm not saying people shouldn't be dressed well or stylishly, but it should be something that is part of life, not the main thing. I like nice clothes; I like having a nice home, but there are more important things. I have gained these values in this society—an appreciation for the arts and the meaning of friendship."

Impi thoroughly enjoyed her visit to Canada, which she thinks is a beautiful country. She also remembers fondly the "wonderful TV programs about animals" she saw there. But when her

brother visited her in Petrozavodsk for three months in 1984, he was impressed with Soviet TV. Impi said, "He understands a little bit of Russian, and after watching our TV for a while he said that if people in Canada see our TV programs for two years they're going to be wise people, they'll know a lot. I had to agree with him; I saw a lot of trash on his TV, something we don't have on ours."

I asked Impi what she thought about the stereotypes the Soviet Union and Canada or the United States create about each other. "I wouldn't say that the stereotypes of Americans or Canadians on Soviet TV are incorrect," she concluded, "but perhaps they do just show one side, the same as the Americans do when they report about the Soviet Union. However, I think the Soviets are more fair. Besides, we print an awful lot of American books by American writers. People read them, so they know, right from the horse's mouth, about the country."

When Impi was visiting her relatives in Canada she spoke to a group of university students and was shocked by their poor knowledge about the Soviet Union. "Those students I talked to thought that people here have someone marching them to work. It's surprising how little they know," said Impi. "I think the Russians know at least ten times more about the Americans than the Americans know about Russians. Especially the young Soviet people, I think they're more interested in other countries in general, and they read a lot."

But the Canadian students were also hungry for knowledge; they kept Impi talking all evening about the Soviet Union: "It seems to me they believed what I told them because, after all, I was from here and they could see I was being honest with them about our accomplishments and our shortcomings. But mainly they were surprised that we are a free people here. They thought we couldn't do anything we wanted without permission."

For the last twenty-five years Impi and her husband have been living in a two-bedroom apartment in downtown Petrozavodsk, a great improvement from the dormitories the Finnish-Americans lived in before the war and the cramped living conditions after the war that persisted into the 1950s. No matter to whom I talked, in whatever city, the story was the same—people started getting spacious single-family apartments only in the 1960s. The Rintalas were no exception.

Impi and Väinö are one of the few couples I have interviewed

who both came from North America. They are also atypical in that their son married another second-generation immigrant, the daughter of Celia Nelson and Toivo Kohonen, who live in Moscow. This happened just by chance, not because either couple had anything against their children marrying outside the immigrant "community." When Irwin was serving in the army the Rintalas invited Celia's and Toivo's daughter, Roberta, to stay with them while she was studying at the university in Petrozavodsk. When Irwin came home on leave, he and Roberta fell in love. Perhaps having had similar family backgrounds in childhood added to their affinity.

Irwin and Roberta set up housekeeping in Moscow. Irwin is a printer and Roberta is a proof reader for the Finnish edition of the monthly *Soviet Union*. They have two daughters—Jane and Kristina (born 1972 and 1975)—neither of whom speak any more English than they learn at school, and no Finnish, because the only language they speak with their parents and grandparents is Russian. Yet, when I first met Jane a few years ago, saw her speaking to her grandmother like any other Russian girl and asked her what her nationality was (as distinct from citizenship) she gave me an astonished look, as if to say, "Well isn't it obvious?" and politely replied, "Of course I'm Finnish." Lately, though, her grandparents tell me that she has been giving this matter some special thought and at the moment is questioning her Finnish ethnic identity: "How can I be Finnish if I only speak Russian and live like a Russian?" It's a good question.

Although Impi's son and grandchildren do not speak much English, Impi enjoys teaching the language to small children and has even developed her own teaching methods which make the learning process good fun. She is kept busy working at the paper forty hours a week and sometimes doing extra translating and writing in the evenings, yet still finds time to give English lessons.

For relaxation Impi watches TV or listens to music. About every other month she goes either to the theater or the symphony. She visits the theater only when a new play comes out, because she has seen everything else. When a good soloist is in Petrozavodsk, she makes it a point to attend the concert. On weekends in the winter she goes skiing, something she has been doing all her life, and in the summer she visits friends in the countryside.

When reflecting on her past, Impi said that if she had to move to another country as she did in the 1930s, and into the same hard conditions, she could never do it again. "When you're young you can get used to anything very fast; now I couldn't. But I've had an interesting life, that's for sure."

Toini Rodkina (née Holtti)

I first met Toini Rodkina in 1968 at the editorial office of the English edition of *Soviet Woman* magazine. She and the other members of the staff hosted a group of Americans I was traveling with in the Soviet Union; we spent an afternoon having a friendly discussion about women's issues. However, it was not until I returned to live in Moscow the next year with my Soviet husband and our small son that I had the opportunity to get to know Toini better.

I was looking for work, so a friend suggested that I try to do some translations for *Soviet Woman* magazine. Toini was responsible for assigning the work and checking the English against the Russian when the translations were finished. I found out then that she had grown up in the United States.

Toini was in her mid-fifties then. Aside from her vitality and consistently cheerful manner, she immediately put me at ease with her forthright manner. This is the same quality I first noticed in Russian people in general, one of the important traits that made me feel at home in the Soviet Union right away. It was comforting to know you could always be sure where you stood with the people. If they did not take to you they made no attempt to feign amicability; if they did like you they embraced you with all the warmth they had. Toini liked me and expressed it in her outgoing, motherly way. Toini and I have kept in touch over the years.

I only met her husband, Dmitry Rodkin, when he was on his death bed, but Toini had never concealed the fact that she was extremely happy in her marriage. She thought her husband, a Russian, was a wonderful person: "He came from the poorest of poor rural families in Russia. He was just an ordinary taxi driver all his life, but he was incapable of ever saying a cross word to

me. I could sometimes fly off the handle, but he would always calm me down."

Toini met Dmitry after the war in 1945. Both of them had lost their spouses during the war. Toini had a daughter and Dmitry had a nine-year-old boy. Together they raised their two children and later had a daughter of their own. But before I get too deep into that chapter of Toini's life, I'd like to back up a bit to the war years.

Toini was already living in Moscow by 1938, but when the war started, her mother, father and sister were living in Petrozavodsk. They managed to escape from the city before enemy troops arrived. Her sister walked the whole 270 miles to Vologda. Toini's sister's legs were amputated a few years ago, perhaps as a result of that long walk in freezing weather. Toini's father got pneumonia on the way, refused hospitalization because he did not want to leave his wife alone, and died soon afterwards. Toini showed me the telegram notifying her of her father's death; a bitter reminder of the countless personal tragedies caused by the war.

During the war Toini worked for Radio Moscow. The day the Germans dropped a bomb targeted on the center of the radio building (the courtyard had a well in the middle in which the bomb landed, causing no damage) Toini had been on a double shift and had just awakened from an hour's sleep on the floor where she had collapsed. Another story she told me was about the time Erskine Caldwell barely made it to the radio studio for a broadcast to the United States. Toini will never forget how he emerged from the studio after reading his text: he bowed to the staff and spoke in praise of Soviet women. This sudden adulation was inspired by the young woman driver who had courageously driven him to the station during an air raid.

In the over fifty years Toini has lived in the Soviet Union, the only time she or the members of her family were ever spoken of as Americans in derogatory terms was during the war in 1943. She noticed that sometimes her daughter, Rina, came home in tears after playing outside with other children. This happened a few times before a neighbor told Toini that some of the kids were belligerently calling Rina an American. Toini assumed this hostility came from the frustrations the children's parents were expressing because the Americans were continuing to delay opening a second front in Europe and relieving somewhat the com-

bat burden on Soviet troops.¹ As a result of this intimidation, Rina refused to learn English from her mother.

When I asked Toini to single out her most satisfying years in the Soviet Union, she said they were from 1945 until the present, especially while her husband was alive (he died in 1986). It was hard for her to say which years were the least satisfying but easy to point out which were the most difficult—the war years. “But the war years were not the least satisfying,” she stressed, “because everyone was doing his or her utmost for victory.”

After the war, life gradually returned to normal. Toini’s family of five lived for several years in a shared apartment in which they had but one large room. This was the most common form of urban housing in the early postwar years because of the acute housing shortage. Toini got along well with her neighbors, who were like family members, and says her husband never said a harsh word to her despite the cramped living conditions and hardships everyone was experiencing in the first few years after the war.

This was the point in Toini’s life when she became totally immersed in Russian culture. She spoke only Russian to her children and husband, and began spending more time with Russian relatives and friends, and less time with former compatriots. None of her three children were motivated to learn either of their mother’s native languages—Finnish or English. When Toini wanted to keep secrets from the children, she and her husband spoke a combination of Russian, English and Finnish of their own creation. But the time came when the children understood their parents, who were forced to discard that “language.” One day their son said, “Mom, do you really think we don’t understand you?”

In January 1982 Toini was featured in an article in her own magazine, certainly a rare occurrence, for journals rarely print praise about their own editorial staffs. But Toini is so well-loved by all her co-workers that they could not resist the temptation to talk about her in reply to a request from a reader in Australia to know more about “those who edit the *Soviet Woman* monthly.”

¹ Measured in the number of German troops faced, multiplied by the length of time they were fought, the U.S.S.R. did 95 per cent of the fighting. That is one reason why Soviet deaths compared to American by a ratio of 50 to 1 : 20,000,000 to 400,000.

Toini feels she is appreciated not just by her family and close friends, but by society as a whole. The public recognition she has received in the form of the various medals and certificates of gratitude testify to that. "After all," she added, "public recognition of labor and a collective spirit are big factors in development of the individual. In the United States I think I would have earned the respect of loved ones, but I don't think I would have the same sense of worth I feel here."

In recent years the office of *Soviet Woman* has received a non-stop flow of American "citizen diplomats" coming in to chat with the staff. Toini is almost always present on those occasions, so she has had plenty of opportunities to form an impression of her former compatriots. She finds that ordinary Americans are more similar to Russians than they are different: "They have the same sense of good humor and are congenial. But Russians seem warmer and more faithful in their friendships."

A habit Toini brought with her from the United States and which she has passed on to the second and third generation in her family is the practice of putting candles on a birthday cake and singing "Happy Birthday." When her children were small she sang American lullabys to them and always liked singing spirituals she learned from a Black school friend.

While she has kept many of the customs and attitudes she developed in the United States, Toini does not yearn to return. She even turned down an opportunity to work at the United Nations in the 1960s for fear the stint in New York would disrupt her peaceful family life in Moscow. However, she has been to Finland, to some East European countries, and to Mongolia, both as a member of delegations and as a tourist.

When I asked Toini why she thought Soviet-American relations were at such a low ebb, she replied: "You know, Paula, Americans have the funny idea that we're trying to export revolution. When they bring that up in the office I always tell them what Lenin said about the impossibility of exporting communism and that this principle has not changed in this country. Each nation has its own traditions and must come to revolution in its own way. The Soviet Union stands for peace; it has never wanted superiority. Americans just have the wrong idea; we're for parity. It would be best if neither side had weapons and we could coexist in peace."

Harry Rapoport

Harry Rapoport still lives in Dnepropetrovsk where he settled down in 1934 after leaving Montreal, Canada. He is a gentle man who speaks softly, in the manner of a philosopher. When asked what personality changes he has noticed in himself since coming to the Soviet Union, he replied that he has become more serious. "Before, I still had this wind in my head, as they say," smiled Harry. "Now I'm more serious and have tried to teach my children to be more serious, to always think twice before they do anything."

One does not necessarily have to move to another country to become serious; age and experience will do it. But I believe that the process of adapting to a new environment makes one wiser. Harry has become so thoroughly accustomed to life in the Soviet Union that he cannot understand why anyone would want to leave: "I always say a person should never leave his homeland. I left mine, but this is my homeland now, and I wouldn't leave it. I guess it all depends on the homeland."

Perhaps this attitude took root in him during the war when he defended the Soviet Union against the Nazis from practically the first to the last day. In 1941 this 25-year-old father of a four-month-old infant joined a volunteer corps that was responsible for the city's defense. When the city was evacuated before the arrival of approaching Nazi occupation forces, he took his wife, child and mother-in-law to the Rostov Region. There he went to the local draft board and signed up for the army.

He served in the engineering corps, first putting up emplacements near Stalingrad (now Volgograd). From there he was transferred to the Caucasus where his unit continued to erect emplacements. In 1943 he was sent to Rostov-on-Don. All this time he had been working as a tractor driver in these operations. In January 1944 he volunteered to join a company of mine

clearers, the most dangerous of all military duties. "I was ready to do anything," he explained, "just as long as it had nothing to do with a tractor."

Harry cleared mines in the Kirovograd Region of the Ukraine, Romania and Hungary, and from Budapest he went to Czechoslovakia where he was involved in the liberation of Bratislava. By VE-Day Harry was in Austria. After that, his corps was sent to the Donets coal fields to clear the explosives from the pits and help rebuild the coal mines. In November 1945 Harry was demobilized and started on his way home.

Harry had many pieces of his life to pick up after the war. He had not seen his wife and daughter for nearly five years; so his family life had to be put in order. And he wanted to continue his university education, which he had started two years before the war.

"Before the war there was a big trend to go to college," explained Harry. "But afterwards the urge was even greater. Young people of different ages came back from the army; all of them wanted to get a higher education, and all of them did well."

The university had been totally demolished by the war, so classes were held in a former dormitory where there was no glass on the windows, no heating, and no blackboards. "We sat on the floor and wrote on newspapers with ink," recalled Harry. "We had one textbook, an old typewriter and typed copies of other textbooks. We students went looking for heaters and brought them there. Then chairs appeared. Then gradually we got blackboards."

Harry graduated in 1948 with a major in English and with straight As. He was hired as an English instructor by the university and remained there until his retirement in 1976. I asked Harry what changes in college students he had observed over the years. Here is his reply:

"Lately students are different: during hard times they were more serious. Now they are less serious—not all of them, but a certain category. I think before people were thinking about how they were going to manage in life. Now the students don't have to struggle; they know their parents will support them and give them everything they want. Of course, we called our parents old-fashioned. And our children call us old-fashioned. And their children call them old-fashioned. Life goes on in its own way; that's beyond our control."

Harry is proud of his own children and grandchildren. His elder daughter is a physicist and the younger one is an English teacher at the university. His granddaughter is a biologist and grandson, an economist. He also has a small great grandson.

I think Harry still wishes the rest of his Canadian family had been able to join him in the Soviet Union. But he is philosophical about it: "I am, unfortunately, the only one from my family who came to the Soviet Union. Anything can happen in life. There are times you regret and times you don't. But I'm satisfied with my life at present. I have a very good two-bedroom apartment. I have had a happy marriage since 1939. My children have a higher education and good jobs, two things I couldn't get in Canada when I was living there."

In 1968 Harry visited his mother and sisters in Los Angeles where they had moved from Canada some years before. He had a wonderful reunion with his family but felt like a fish out of water in the United States. He recalled: "I was there for two months, and all the same my heart was yearning to come back to Dnepropetrovsk. I couldn't get used to life there. The attitude toward one another there is not like it is here. Here it is more friendly, more comradely. There, everybody lives for himself. All people think about is money, money, money."

In comparing his way of life in Canada, and now in the Soviet Union, Harry pointed out: "There I was an electrician but I had to work as a painter and do other odd jobs to make a living. I had no security. Here life has been much more stable. You can always plan for the future. Life is easier; we do not have the mental stress. That same stress I remember as a young man in the West is still there. You may be working today but you don't know what will happen tomorrow."

Harry's younger daughter, who is an English instructor, visited his relatives in Los Angeles in 1979. While she enjoyed seeing the United States and practicing her English, when she returned home she told her father she could not live there. Harry explained: "She just couldn't get used to everybody living for themselves. I have come to the conclusion that once a person has lived in the Soviet Union and goes abroad to a Western country he has a hard time getting used to life there. Many of those people want to return home. My daughter spoke to many people who went there from the Soviet Union; they asked her about home, and they were sorry they left."

Harry feels quite optimistic about his country's future. He watched it being built up from the ruins of war and feels the rapid progress continuing today. "Have you seen the whole city?" he said, referring to Dnepropetrovsk. "It's a beautiful city now and growing rapidly. Life is improving all the time. Most of my friends have very good flats. They dress much better than they did before, and live better in general. Those who are retired live on their pensions; the ones who are working live on their earnings. I can go to the polyclinic doctor whenever I want, and whenever I need hospitalization, it's no problem."

Harry may be optimistic about his personal life, but he was not the least bit cheerful about an improvement in Soviet-American relations when I talked to him in the fall of 1985. "I don't think times will change while Reagan is in office," said Harry. "A man will never change his mind if he has no mind to change."

Harry's message to North Americans is to do everything possible to promote peaceful relations with the Soviet Union and end all wars. "War destroys, and peace helps build," said Harry. "We are builders, not destroyers."

Celia Nelson

When Celia Nelson was visiting a relative in Finland in 1982, the precinct policeman who registered her stay was intrigued by her papers.

"That's funny," said the policeman. "You're a Swede, born in America of Finnish-Swedish parents, and you live in the Soviet Union. How come? Now all you need to finish the picture is a pekingese dog."

"I told him I had a Canadian newfoundland," said Celia. "He sure got a kick out of that, and said to come to him if I needed any help."

Most other visitors to Finland don't bother signing up with the police, said Celia, but those are the rules and she believes in following them. "If you're supposed to do it this way, then do it this way," is her motto. That is probably one of the things that has made her life easier in the Soviet Union. Celia has nothing to hide from anybody; she lives by the law and has a clean conscience.

She is also an optimist. "You have to be an optimist to get along anywhere," she maintained. This attitude certainly helped her in the early 1950s when Stalin was still alive and some immigrants had problems keeping their jobs. Celia's husband, Toivo Kohonen, was among the unlucky. He had been a trombone player in jazz bands and orchestras since he had come to the Soviet Union in the 1930s. In those days musicians were employed by the band leader or conductor, but in 1950, when Moskontsert (the Moscow Concert Agency) was formed, all the hiring was done by the agency. A woman in the personnel department told a prominent band leader who was ready to hire Toivo: "How can you want a person who was born in the United States? He might sabotage the band by playing the wrong music."



Emma Alperin in 1985 looking at old family pictures taken in the United States and Soviet Union in the past fifty years



Carl Watts



Olga Brezhko, from Toronto, Canada, in her office where she is head of the English language edition of the *Ukraine* monthly published in her adopted city, Kiev



The author with her children, Andrei (nineteen) and Gregory (fourteen) Danilenko, in their Moscow home, Christmas 1986





(Left to right) Andrei Beryozkin, his son Nickie, Tracy Kuehn's husband Georgy Gorbachev dressed as Santa Claus, their son Philip, enjoying Christmas together in the Gorbachevs home in 1985

Patty Beryozkin (from Baton Rouge, Louisiana), her husband Andrei and their three children





Tracy Kuehn (from Florida), her husband Georgy Gorbachev, and their two sons, Danny (six months) and Philip (two and a half), in Moscow, November 1986



Tom Crane (from New York city) and his Muscovite wife Rita at the end of 1986, a year after he moved to the Soviet Union

As funny as such a comment sounds today, it was no laughing matter then, when Toivo was out of a job. Having no other choice at the time, Toivo reluctantly put his trombone in the shed and went to work as a cabinet maker for a shop near their house that made furniture to order. He got by on the woodworking skills he had learned in Minnesota and took pleasure in his new trade.

Celia and Toivo had many musician friends, but when it became clear that Toivo had been blacklisted, they were afraid their friends would vanish. Celia said that fortunately all their friends stuck by them throughout that period, seeking their companionship as they always had. In talking to others who had similar job problems at that time, I learned that Russian friends tried to help them find other work.

In 1954 (after Stalin's death) Toivo went back to work with the then famous jazz band directed by Eddie Rosner. He stayed with that band for quite a while, but also played for two popular bands led by Mikhail Frumkin and Konstantin Orbelian. In the early 1970s Toivo grew tired of travelling all over the country with bands so he retired from music altogether and went back to "special order" cabinet making.

Celia proudly showed me a book about the history of Soviet jazz printed in the Soviet Union in the 1970s—Toivo's pictures are there, and he is given due praise as a leading Soviet jazz trombone player.

Before Toivo retired he could never understand why their friends, who were no longer working, frequently said they were too busy to get together. "Now I know why," said Toivo. "Now that I'm on pension I don't have enough time to do anything." Celia laughed, "He's so busy I can't even get him to paint the bathroom."

Celia figures the reason they seem to have so little extra time is because they do things much more leisurely around the house. Celia also finds herself cooking and baking more now that she is retired from her job as a proof reader for the Finnish edition of the *Soviet Union* monthly. "When I was working, Toivo didn't ask for pies and cakes. Now he wants them. I also read more now than I ever did, mostly books in different languages."

Since the end of the war Celia and Toivo have lived in a single-family home that until just recently was right outside Moscow city limits. It is a cozy two-bedroom home, most of

which Toivo built himself. Naturally the kitchen cabinets and some of the furniture were also made by Toivo. Their daughter, Roberta, and Celia's parents used to live with them. But Roberta has her own apartment in downtown Moscow and Celia's parents have passed away. Now the couple live there alone with their dog, but they are visited at least once a week by Roberta and her daughters, Jane and Kristina. Frequent guests from Petrozavodsk are Impi and Väinö Rintala, long-time friends. Other old friends who live in Moscow like spending a day in the country with Celia and Toivo from time to time. Sally Laakso and her husband Vili especially like leaving their home in downtown Moscow in the winter to go to the Kohonens to visit and ski.

Most of the friends Celia and Toivo have now are Russians, although they also see some friends they knew in Karelia, like Sally and Vili. Celia recalled: "I had very good friends in America when I lived there, at school and at college. We got along very well. Our friendships were sincere. The Russian friends I have are also sincere. So I find more similarities than differences." However, Celia added that in the Soviet Union people are more apt to strike up conversations with strangers and offer a helping hand.

Because Toivo always worked among Russians, he says he sometimes thinks he speaks better Russian than English or Finnish. Although Toivo and Celia spoke English to each other when they married, they now speak mostly Russian and sometimes add words here and there from English and Finnish. "Once my wife and I were talking and our daughter, Roberta, started laughing for no apparent reason at all," recalled Toivo. "She was still going to school then. She said that in one sentence my wife and I used three languages. It's easier to talk that way because you use the shortest words in each language."

Roberta, born in 1949, grew up in a rural setting outside Moscow. "I tried not to spoil her by buying her everything everybody else had," said Celia. "I didn't get her an expensive winter fur coat just because the neighbor girls had them. I'm absolutely against that. And I'm against piercing ears at an early age like they're doing now. I was also opposed to her wearing rings and jewelry; I'm glad the schools discourage it. I always dressed Roberta lightly and she does that with her children. The neighbors criticized us for it because they thought she would catch

colds. But we never had any trouble with illnesses because we never believed in overbundling."

The only complaint Celia and Toivo have had with the Soviet educational system is that the children must go to school six days a week. "Children shouldn't have to go to school on Saturdays," she argued. "Instead, they could go with their parents somewhere on the weekends; this way they don't have enough time to spend with their families."

Now that she is retired, Celia has more time to read, and criticism in the newspapers is high on her list: "I like to read criticism of various policies and actions. People are paying more attention to these articles nowadays than they did in the past. A lot of that has to do with our new General Secretary Gorbachev."

Emma Alperin

Emma Alperin was an English teacher in Dnepropetrovsk all her adult life, until her retirement in 1979 from the Mining Institute. She retired because the arthritis in her hip made it difficult for her to get around outside her home. "All my life I have been with young people and miss them so much now that I'm not working. I loved my work very much and feel that it was appreciated—I have a medal as a labor veteran."

Emma agrees with Harry that the students before, during and after the war, were more diligent than they are today. "I don't know why," she said. "I often wonder about it and think that it is because we had higher ideals, political and cultural perhaps, so we tried our best. Now the young have everything readymade for them. They don't need to struggle. They live much better now. I think maybe that's the reason; I'm not sure. Or perhaps older people just look fondly on the past."

Emma married only in 1950, at the age of thirty, because she was waiting for her fiancé—who was missing in action during the war—to miraculously turn up. Finally, when she had lost all hope, she married a young lawyer, with whom she lived until his death in 1981.

The war and its aftermath robbed Emma of nearly ten years of youth. That was typical of her entire generation. She and her parents were evacuated from Dnepropetrovsk just before the Nazis arrived. Being Jewish, they almost certainly would have perished in an occupied city. Emma's brother served in the army during the entire war and rejoined them in Dnepropetrovsk afterwards.

"The Nazis killed all the Jews here in the two years they occupied the city," said Emma. "Many of our relatives were killed—about thirty of them, all distant relatives. I think over 10,000 Jews were killed here in Dnepropetrovsk during the war. The only Jew I know who survived the occupation was one girl, an

eleven-year-old relative of ours. She escaped from the pit where they were all going to be shot. She tore her hand away from her mother's and told the officer nearby she was not a Jew. She was a very beautiful little girl; she must have charmed the officer, who let her leave. She told us about all the atrocities she saw; it was really terrible."

The fact that Emma became a widow so early was also due to the war. Emma's husband was only fifty-eight when he died of a war-related illness that had paralyzed him. Joining the army at the age of seventeen, right after he finished high school, he was wounded many times and earned numerous medals for valor. He developed an ulcer from the war and was therefore registered as a disabled veteran, although he continued to work as an industrial lawyer all the same.

The Alperins had two children, Felix and Eugenia. Both are engineers and both now have families of their own. Felix, his wife, and their two children live with Emma in their large apartment. Eugenia, her husband and infant child have their own flat. Emma helps look after her grandchildren when the parents are at work, and they in turn are good company for Emma, who does not get around much any more.

When I asked Emma what changes she felt had taken place in her life she replied: "I wasn't a highly educated person when I came to the Soviet Union. I would have never gone to college in the United States. I specialized in stenography and typing at school, and began working as a salesperson; here I became an educated, cultured woman."

With respect to her living conditions she said: "We have everything anyone could need. We pay very little rent. As the widow of a disabled war veteran I pay half rent, which amounts to about ten rubles. And as an invalid my husband got a free car that my son is now driving. All my relatives have a higher education and they live very well, too."

Emma would like to recover from her arthritis and be able to work and travel. "I would like to see America again after fifty years," mused Emma. "There are very many beautiful places which we were never able to see because we were too poor to travel; I only read about them. I never saw Niagara Falls, I never went to Yosemite Park, to Hot Springs, the places we used to hear about but could never afford to visit."

Emma is worried about the deterioration of U.S.-Soviet

relations. She thinks it would help if the American people would know more about the Soviet Union. She said to me: "You can be sure that the Soviet people will never begin a war; they suffered too much during the last one. All people must live in friendship, mutual assistance and trust each other. The American people should realize we want to live in peace together with them. They can develop the way they want to, and they have to let us do the same. Live and let live."

Carl and George Watts

Describing his own personality, Carl Watts observed, "In some ways I am sort of shy, but I can be outgoing too." People who know Carl well say he is also kind, and always has been. This tall, distinguished-looking man lives by this principle:

"I always believe things are going to get better and then they improve. When somebody asks me how things are going, I say terrific, even if something's eating me up inside. I always try to be in a good mood because otherwise you have two strikes against you."

Carl said he was an optimist even before he moved away from Canada at the age of twenty-one. The one big change he sees in himself since coming to the Soviet Union is that he is now more interested in politics. "When I read the newspapers in Canada," explained Carl, "I would first go through the sports section, sometimes read about murders, look over the movie reviews, but never politics. Now I read cover to cover, starting with political affairs."

People's interests change with age no matter where they live, but undoubtedly one's environment helps shape one's concerns. In Carl's case, going to a foreign languages college and making a career in the media had a lot to do with making him more political.

Carl and his brother, George, spent their first semester of college in 1954 in Leningrad studying at the Institute of Foreign Languages. After that first semester, however, they transferred to Moscow's Institute of Foreign Languages, the best in the country.

I had heard stories about the troubles the Watts brothers had at college with phonetics from people who had gone to school with them. So when Carl began reminiscing about his college

years I made a point of asking him about these rumors. How could it be that two native speakers would have troubles with phonetics?

The explanation was simple. The teachers in Leningrad insisted on Oxford English. "American pronunciation at that time wasn't very common," Carl pointed out. "They insisted we speak Oxford English but we said we couldn't. There was another fellow there from Gorky who had worked with the Americans at the auto plant there. He spoke like we did, with an American accent. But in classes he could ad lib and speak with a British accent. We had some friction there because we didn't give in. When we were transferred to Moscow all the teachers came together to discuss with us our future studies. I remember this phonetician, Kaplan, who asked if we had any problems. We told him what had happened to us in Leningrad. He said you have a good Bostonian accent, so leave it that way. We never had any troubles after that."

When Carl and George graduated in 1959, they had a sound educational background behind them and vast work experience as interpreters and English announcers on Radio Moscow. For several months the two of them had co-hosted a weekly radio program devoted to the upcoming Moscow Youth Festival in 1957. When the festival finally began, they spent all their time with the Canadian youth delegation.

As soon as they had received their college diplomas in 1959, the Watts brothers were hired at the Radio as full-time employees. Both are still working there. Carl is an announcer for Radio Moscow World Service, and George is a translator and announcer.

Carl told me that in 1954, when he set off to Leningrad, he felt "...we were here to stay. We'd get an education and find good jobs." At Radio Moscow the Watts brothers achieved even more than planned, because it was there that Carl met his future wife, and through her, George met his. Today the four of them are best of friends; they form the most tightly-knit family I know.

Fairly soon after he started working at Radio Moscow, Carl met Valeria, whom everyone simply calls Maka. Her mother was French, her father, Russian, but both had come to the Soviet Union in the 1920s. Maka was born in Leningrad in 1937, the same year her father died, so she grew up alone with her French mother. At Radio Moscow she has always worked as a translator

from Russian into French. To further her knowledge of the language, Maka attended French courses at the Sorbonne in 1967-1968.

After Carl had been seeing Maka for a while he asked her if she had a friend she could introduce to his brother George. She did—her friend all through school, Galina, who was an engineer. The four of them went out together and the blind date was a total success. In the spring of 1961 both couples married.

What makes this story particularly interesting is that Maka and her childhood friend, Galina, had dreamed, while still schoolgirls, of marrying brothers so they would always be together. Carl and George often spend weekends in the country and vacations together with their wives. "You know," said Carl, "we can spend the whole weekend in the woods and our wives will talk to each other non-stop. Then we come home, the telephone rings and it's Galina on the phone, and they talk some more." Carl also said that his son Nikita, an auto engineer, and George's daughter, a researcher at the Institute of Latin American Studies, are like brother and sister.

Carl agreed with me when I suggested that he and George may not have become so close had they remained in Canada. "I think family relations here are closer than in Canada," he said. "I know most of the kids of immigrant parents in Canada ended up going their own way. They might have lived in the same city but each had his own problems, they weren't close to each other. But here we are definitely closer; maybe it's because of the way of life. I don't want to say we're superior in that respect, but we do feel closer together here than there."

One big factor that tied the family together so tightly was undoubtedly the exceptionally close friendship of Maka and Galina, a rare relationship in North America if for no other reason than people move around so much, do not stay in one community or school for the length of time it took to cement the friendship of the Watts sister-in-laws. Carl also felt a lot had to do with the fact that the brothers were only two years apart and went through their whole adaptation process in the Soviet Union together. Although they had many friends helping them along in the beginning, they could always fully count on each other. Their father died several years ago, but their mother still lives in Moscow and they are in touch with her on a daily basis.

Carl believes his youth in Canada had a very big influence on

his attitude to work. In Part I of this book he talked about picking tobacco and fruit in Canada with his parents from the age of eight or nine to help support the family. "The kids here in the cities don't work, by and large," he complained. "The fact that we began working for wages at an early age formed our conscientious work habits. I don't want to say that I'm great, but I work conscientiously. I don't do a job just to do the bloody job. I can't do anything half way. I think we got this into our blood when we were still in Canada. We knew how much we had to put in to make a buck, knew how hard it was to earn the money."

Carl's good work habits carry into his home. He does much more around the house than most of his male friends. He does much of the cooking and the shopping, although his wife does all the housecleaning. Carl always likes to have some Canadian dishes to offer guests. One tradition his family has kept from Canada is open house on Christmas Eve. He used to invite relatives and friends over for a buffet dinner every Christmas Eve until a few years ago when Maka's mother died. But last year the family resumed the tradition and he said everyone who came appreciated it.

Carl feels that not only family relationships in the Soviet Union are closer than in the country of his birth, but friendship as well. "People are good; they'll do anything for you," he asserted. Carl did not keep in touch with any of his Canadian friends when he moved from Canada, but in 1972 he unexpectedly heard from Janice, the young woman he left behind. The letter arrived after he worked as the English announcer for the first big National Hockey League series in Moscow in 1972. "I tell you, it was the nicest, friendliest letter I have ever gotten from anyone. I was apparently shown on Canadian television. Janice somehow found my address and wrote to me. I wrote her back but didn't get any reply from her."

Besides being a radio announcer, Carl sometimes works as an interpreter for the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, the Institute of Advanced Medical Studies, and international hockey tournaments. He is in big demand because of his personable manner and conscientious attitude. "When a person does anything he should put his heart into it to get satisfaction," said Carl. "When I get praised it makes me feel good. In Canada you just get money for good work, but here you also get appreciation. It's not that I want to be universally recognized. But it's nice to know

that your work is appreciated; then you want to try more."

Carl received a government award for his two weeks of radio sports coverage during the 1980 Olympics in Moscow. He covered the Olympic opening ceremony, swimming, track and field, and boxing events. He was also pleased by the many letters from Radio Moscow listeners. He has also been commended for exceptional work in general.

He has also earned praise from some Canadian newspaper reporters in connection with his involvement with Moscow hockey tournaments. Carl showed me one such article; it was printed in 1979 in his hometown Hamilton newspaper, *The Spectator*.

"If you were listening to Sunday's Canada-Czech hockey game on radio, or if you were watching it on television you must have been intrigued by the fact that the stadium announcer at ringside spoke flawless U.S.-accented English. The man in question who announced the scoring plays and penalties didn't speak with the accent of the British Isles. He spoke a distinctly North American brand of the English language. You might have been prepared to guess that the announcer must come from Winnipeg, Hamilton or some other Canadian city. Well, if you guessed that he must be a Winnipeger or a Hamiltonian, you're correct on both counts. . . . Unquestionably Watts is the most completely articulate interpreter to whom Canadians have ever been exposed on trips to the Soviet Union."

Being a modest man, Carl is the first to admit that the Soviet Union has other fine interpreters. But it is quite an accomplishment to be recognized in both his adopted country and his hometown of Hamilton, Canada.

Olga Brezhko

Olga Brezhko is a tall and slender blond who likes to joke, has the erect posture of a dancer, and a ready smile punctuated by dimples, making her look younger than her forty-five years. I arranged for my interview with her on a hot summer day in Kiev at the editorial office of the *Ukraine* magazine where she has worked since the publication of its first issue in 1970. Olga's parents had settled in Voroshilovgrad when they arrived from Toronto, Canada, in 1955, but her older sister, Nina, later went to work in Kiev. Olga followed Nina there in 1969 to try to make a new life for herself far away from her ex-husband.

Sitting next to Olga at the T-shaped conference table of the magazine's editor-in-chief, his assistant, and her colleague from the English language department, I learned that Olga started out as an English proof reader of texts translated from the Ukrainian and Russian, and is now the head of the English department; it was a rapid climb. Olga is held in high esteem as a professional English editor. The editor-in-chief told me, "She's liked by everyone, and I hope she feels she is treated well by us."

Just a few months before we met in Kiev, Olga's ex-husband began writing her and visited her once. It appeared that he had licked his drinking problem, so he felt he could try once more to mend the marriage. When I asked Olga how she felt about him after all these years, if she still cared, her reply was unequivocal: "Of course! Otherwise I would have remarried long ago."

So far he has shown he truly no longer drinks, but Olga, after enjoying her independence and peace of mind for so long, is in no hurry to be trapped again. She said she has changed tremendously while living in Kiev and loves her career. "I am now so used to being on my own that it frightens me to think that someone might disturb my peace, my order," she said firmly.

Olga is a hard-working person. She spends hours at a time,

even after work, translating from Russian and Ukrainian into English. But she also reads a lot, attends the theater, visits her many friends, and spends at least once or twice a week with her older sister Nina, nephew and his children. When I was in Kiev, Olga was also spending time every day visiting her ailing mother in the hospital. Although her parents live in another town, near Brest, Olga had her mother hospitalized in Kiev where she could look after her. Understanding the pressures on Olga, her editor-in-chief allowed her to work on a flexible schedule so she could visit her mother during the day and do the rest of her work at home in the evenings.

In addition to her family duties, Olga is an active trade union member who is in charge of ordering food, footwear and knitwear to be sold at the editorial office for the employees' convenience. This saves Olga's co-workers much shopping time, although it is one more responsibility for her.

Olga feels that she is the one in the family who has adapted the best to Soviet life, the one who knows how to get things done. The others look to her first for advice, comfort and help. "Sometimes it is almost too much for me to feel responsible for everyone," she complained with a smile. It is hard for her to explain how she adapted so thoroughly, but she suspects one reason is because she never let little things, the small life-style differences, bother her as much as she saw them trouble other immigrants from Canada.

Though Olga feels completely at home in the Soviet Union, she still retains certain habits and customs she developed in her childhood in Canada. At all family get-togethers Olga and Nina prepare a point of serving Canadian dishes they make from recipes in the cookbooks they brought with them. They also regularly make spaghetti, pizza, canapes, hamburgers, closed-faced sandwiches, chile sauce, and various cakes and pies. What Olga still misses and cannot get in Kiev is popcorn, peanut butter, 7-up, gingerale, taffy, and fast foods. She especially misses these treats when she is at the beach.

The Brezhkos also never miss the birthday rituals of their youth—singing "Happy Birthday," blowing out the candles and making wishes over the birthday cake. Christmas Eve is also a treat the Brezhkos do not deny themselves, or their children. Turkey, cranberries, and pumpkin pie on Thanksgiving is also a must, when they do not forget to check the calendar.

I asked Olga what major changes she feels have taken place in the Soviet Union since she first came in 1955. She did not know where to begin: "A lot of changes have taken place in this country," she asserted. "First of all, when we came here the cultural level was much lower, the way people dress has improved greatly, the standard of living has changed immensely. People walk around with smiling faces; they have everything they want for the most part. That's the main thing. Gradually a lot of changes have been made. Even now, with every day, you see that the people are changing, they're getting more open-minded and their standard of living is improving."

Olga talked not only about the material standard of living. She went on to say, "The people are trying to enrich their own lives by reading, for instance. They want to know more about other countries, how other people live, and then compare their experiences with those of others."

This led us into a discussion about better understanding between peoples, more specifically, between the Soviet people and Canadians. Olga thought the best way to faster understanding was to get together more often and talk to each other. "The thing is that once you get to know a people better," said Olga, "of course, you like them better and they understand you better."

Olga offered her observations of the impressions of some Canadians who have been in the Soviet Union: "There are people who come to the Soviet Union now and think that it is a country where people are followed and their phones are tapped. I've met people who told me that before they left Canada they were warned that they would be followed everywhere in the Soviet Union, that every word would be written down and they would get into trouble. When I lived in Canada people said the Soviet Union had an iron curtain around it, that once you got in the country you wouldn't be let out. I think that some people still have that same idea, and are afraid to come and see for themselves. If they did they'd see that we lead perfectly normal lives."

When I asked Olga to fantasize on what her life would have been like had she stayed in Canada she was absolutely stumped. All she was sure of was that she would have gone to college, but what kind of career or personal life she might have had was a big question mark in her mind. As for leaving the Soviet Union to return to Canada, she said: "What for? If I wanted to leave, I would have gone long ago. I could leave for good now if I

wanted to; but what would I do there? Who needs me there?
All my family and friends are here. But I would like to visit
Canada, see all the places where I spent my childhood and meet
some of my old teachers and friends."

Tracy Kuehn

Tracy Kuehn has been living in Moscow since 1980, the first two years as a student, and since 1982 as a translator for Raduga Publishers. As she said in Part I, she would rather be working with profoundly retarded children, which would give her an outlet for her creative needs. As a translator she does not get the same satisfaction, although she does feel good about the children's literature she has translated.

"I suppose part of the problem is that I am a beginning translator, whereas I was an excellent teacher of the retarded," she sighed. "My boss at Raduga says the first five years of translating is like being in high school or a university. I have a feeling you're learning no matter how long you work at it. Maybe the better I become, the more I will like translating because now part of the problem is that I think of myself as being mediocre, although some people say I am too hard on myself."

What Tracy does like about her job is her boss and co-workers, whom she finds friendly and helpful, and most importantly, she appreciates working entirely at home. This is especially important now that she has two small children, Philip and Daniel. "In some ways, if I did have a choice of another job, I might not take it because I would have to work outside the home. With young children my job is ideal. It takes a good deal of will power to work systematically, but it means I can be home with my little ones, which is very important to me."

Raising children in the Soviet Union, in general, has been an experience with its ups and downs for Tracy. She believes strongly in a father's presence during a child's birth, but that is not permitted in Soviet maternity hospitals. Thus, Tracy has had both her children in a hospital in Florida, where her mother lives, and where her husband was allowed to be by her side. The very idea is so alien in the Soviet Union that almost every

Soviet woman and man I have talked to has said they would not even consider such a thing even if it were permitted.

Tracy did not have any trouble convincing Georgy to be there, and he is now one of the Soviet Union's few advocates of such childbirth. He claimed the experience was among the most significant in his life. "You know," he said, "it's hard to describe what I felt when Philip was being born; it was an experience comparable to all my forty years." He and Tracy have talked at length about their views with their Soviet friends, but few have been able to understand them.

Tracy told me she likes living in the Soviet Union, "first, because Georgy is here, and second, the country intrigues me, and so the opportunity to live here is interesting. In some ways I feel I'm still continuing my education by being here: learning Russian, experiencing life in a different country, finding out a little more about Soviet society in general, the way things work, politically and socially."

When I asked Tracy what she is learning, the first thing that came to her mind was this: "There are a lot of aspects about Soviet society that when you first get here from the United States seem arbitrary. You're programmed to expect that. But one of the big things I've learned is that if you follow a certain process, you can get things changed. You can do this if you are a Soviet citizen, but I learned you can do it even if you are a foreigner. That's one positive area I discovered after living here awhile."

The example Tracy gave was a letter written and signed by twelve foreigners working for Soviet organizations in Moscow in 1983. It was addressed to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, and appealed for a change in one of Aeroflot's policies regarding foreigners working in the Soviet Union. Aeroflot had ruled that year that such people, whether they worked for foreign or Soviet organizations, had to pay their return fare to the Soviet Union in hard currency.

The petitioners argued that the small percentage of their wages they send to the U.S. in hard currency is not enough to pay for return tickets, especially if they had children. Very few of the people who signed the letter thought it would do any good, and there were even some who refused to sign, fearing they would get into trouble. The letter was answered within a month, the period within which government bodies are required by law to

respond to complaints and petitions. Aeroflot's policy was reversed, and there were no repercussions.

Tracy is happy that her Soviet husband has been granted exit permits to visit the United States with her each of the three times he has applied. This has been the experience of most of the Soviet spouses of foreigners working in the Soviet Union, all of whom process their papers through regular channels.

As for bringing up children, Tracy has met with a sure source of frustration: "One feature of the Russian character is the need to tell others what to do. I can't tell you how many times a grandmotherly type has come up to me to tell me what I should or should not be doing with Philip. It's well meant, but there are times when it's annoying. I've gotten very good at listening politely and then walking a little farther away and continuing whatever I was doing before." The common situations in which Tracy finds herself the object of unsolicited advice is when Philip is not wearing a hat (in both hot and cold weather) when other children are, walking barefoot in the summertime, collecting rocks in his little pail (because the rocks are dirty), sitting on the ground (because it's too cold), and running (because he could fall down).

Tracy also voiced concern about her children's citizenship. Both youngsters were born in the U.S. and thus have U.S. passports, but according to Soviet law, they are Soviet citizens. Until the early 1980s, the authorities let the parents in such families decide their children's citizenship until the children themselves came of age. Now, however, people like Tracy, who want their children to travel in and out of the country as U.S. citizens (because the procedure is much simpler and faster), never know what to expect when they plan a trip abroad—one time the visa bureau recognizes the child's U.S. passport, and the next time it does not. Tracy and others like her would like to be able to determine the children's citizenship and not worry about sudden policy changes.

The positive aspects of living in the Soviet Union still outweigh the negative as far as Tracy is concerned. "First and foremost, is the knowledge that my children are safe in the streets of a city with a population of over eight million. And as a woman I appreciate not having to fear the crimes against women increasingly frequent in the U.S." Although Tracy has not always been fully satisfied with her polyclinic pediatricians, she has good pre-

natal care and her children have had excellent medical care ministered by specialists in pediatric institutes. And she has found her Soviet friends and co-workers to be loyal and caring, and her Soviet in-laws to be helpful and warm people.

In addition, Tracy feels that by living in the Soviet Union she fulfills a necessary function: "I believe it is very important that people know more about the Soviet Union and that Soviets know more about the U.S. When I was in the U.S., I was involved in introducing Soviet visitors to U.S. culture through the New York Society of American-Soviet Friendship. Now it seems that my role has switched—helping Americans understand more about the Soviet Union. I get phone calls fairly frequently where someone who has arrived from the States says, 'Hi, I'm a friend of so and so and I'd like to meet you.' I usually try to have them over for dinner on some evening that Georgy is home, so they have a chance to ask me whatever questions they like, talk to him, and see how we live."

Patty Beryozkin

Patty Beryozkin has been living in Moscow since 1982 with her Soviet husband and children. While she feels her permanent home is in the Soviet Union, she still has problems with some aspects of the life-style. "I really miss fast food places," she complained. "When I'm absolutely starving I miss being able to jump in my car, and go down the street to a drive-in McDonald's. When it gets to the point that I think I'm becoming neurotic about it, then I know it's time to go home. I try and hit all the junk food places when I'm in Baton Rouge—McDonald's hamburgers, Kristie Kream donuts, and Kentucky Fried Chicken. Last time I was planning our trip I even made a list of what I wanted to eat," laughed Patty.

Shopping for clothes is something else Patty prefers to do in the United States. A petite woman just over five feet tall, she has difficulty finding anything small enough to fit her in Soviet stores. Soviet women Patty's size often have their clothes tailor-made, but that means having to pick out material and then going to a dressmaker several times for fittings. Patty also feels that she can get a better bargain in the States and frequently buys her clothes on sale.

Since she spends much time working at home, Patty feels she has not made her own close friends among Russians. "I know and like my husband's friends," she said. "But for some reason I haven't been able to form close relationships with Russian women."

Patty had a few critical words to say about the bureaucracy: "It's incredible. There are so many rules and regulations, and they can be changed without warning." What she does like about living in the Soviet Union are the safe streets and the almost total absence of a drug culture. She believes for this

reason that the atmosphere for bringing up children in the Soviet Union is much healthier than in the United States.

After hearing about what Patty considers the positive and negative aspects of life here, I asked her how she thought Soviet citizens regarded their society: "I'm sure the majority of people here would not change their way of life. Of course they would like better consumer goods, but if the only way they can acquire western consumer goods is by changing the socialist government for a capitalist government, then they'll wait until they solve their problems in their own way. I think people are counting heavily on Gorbachev. The mood was simply euphoric when he was announced the new General Secretary. He has made some changes in economic policies, and they are beginning to be felt. I have a lot of confidence and hope in Gorbachev." I interviewed Patty in the spring of 1986, a couple of months after the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. That was when the Party approved the guidelines for socio-economic development which call for restructuring the economy and doubling the country's economic potential by the year 2000. The economic growth envisaged in this period will be the same as for the past seventy years, since 1917. Speaking in July 1986, in Khabarovsk, in the Soviet Far East, Mikhail Gorbachev noted that the changes foreseen in the decisions of the April Plenary Meeting and the 27th Congress amount to a real revolution—in implementing the achievements of technology in the economy, in management, in the whole system of relations in society, and in the minds and hearts of people and their understanding of the present day. This revolution is taking place in the framework of our socialist system, he stressed. It will reveal the potential of a planned economy and of socialist democracy, culture and social justice, promised Gorbachev.¹

The 27th Congress also approved a comprehensive plan to rid the world of nuclear weapons by the year 2000 and considerably reduce the stockpiles of conventional weapons. When I asked Patty what she thought about the Soviet Union's proposals for world peace and disarmament, she commented at length:

"I really believe in the sincerity of what they call their peace policy. I don't think that it is just propaganda. At kindergarten

¹ See: *Pravda*, August 2, 1986.

our son Nikita is taught to value friendship between nations, between peoples. On September 1, the opening day of school, the first class taught to all the children throughout the entire country is devoted to peace, to getting children to understand the meaning of the word, what peace means to all peoples on earth. I applaud this initiative. Whereas nobody in the United States is advocating war¹, there aren't posters everywhere in the U.S., like there are in the Soviet Union, with slogans such as '*Everyone Must Work for Peace*,' and '*Peace to the World*.' "

Patty and Andrei visited her parents in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 1982, 1984 and 1986. "Andrei loves going to the United States as much as I do," said Patty. "We've never had a bad time. People greet him with a lot of interest. It's the same as when people in the Soviet Union find out I'm an American—they are full of questions."

Andrei has never met with any direct hostility on these trips, but once in 1984, when he and Patty went to a college football game, they were upset to see a bumper sticker on the car parked next to theirs reading: "Russians Suck." "That wasn't too pleasant," recalled Patty. "I can't imagine seeing anything like that about the U.S. written on a wall here in the Soviet Union."

Patty has three children now: Nikita, six, who was born in the United States; Sandra, three, and baby Alexis, both of whom were born in Moscow. Patty speaks only English to her children, but since virtually everyone else they come in contact with speaks Russian, it isn't suprising that Nikita and Sandra express themselves better in that language. Nikita has made good progress with his English thanks to his annual trips to the United States with his parents. His sister, Sandra, speaks little English as of yet, but Patty believes a two-month visit to Baton Rouge will help considerably.

While the children are in contact with Russian culture through their Russian father, grandparents and the childcare system, they also see other Americans and Britishers who visit frequently, and get a daily diet of American movies on their parents' video

¹ Gallup finds there are some 10,000,000 supporters of the Armageddon theory, who believe that biblical prophesy describes an *inevitable* nuclear war between the U.S. and U.S.S.R., in which all will be destroyed. The faithful, however, will attain everlasting bliss in heaven. Ronald Reagan has been quoted as saying he believes there is something to this prophesy.

cassette recorder. When I asked Patty if she saw any signs of problems developing in her children because of their bilingual and two-culture environment, she replied she had not noticed any. In talking about the future and how her children would have to come to terms with two different cultures, Patty did not foresee any difficulty:

"I think that since we're raising our kids here they'll be more a part of this country. But I don't think they'll feel out of place in the United States because we'll be taking them there with us every year or so. They have their cousins there, grandparents, aunts and uncles."

Based on my observations of the older children of other Soviet-American families living in Moscow, I predict Patty's and Tracy's children, as well as others like them growing up between two cultures, are going to have identity problems. Sooner or later they are going to wonder whether they are more Russian or American, and will have to grapple with their self-identity.

How painful this process is and how the problem is resolved will largely depend on the extent to which the American parent assimilates, how much influence each parent has on the children, and even the influence of the grandparents. Ultimately it will depend on the individual children, how well they will be able to utilize this broader vision of the world that will always make them somewhat different from their peers in either country. The world certainly needs more such bicultural people who have a deep knowledge of and respect for both nations, and who can act as a bridge of understanding between the Soviet Union and United States.

Tom Crane

When I first met Tom Crane at the end of 1985, shortly after he arrived in the Soviet Union to settle down with his wife, Rita Latsinova, I liked him at once. The tall, blond young man with kind eyes and in his early thirties is the type of person who can make friends with anyone. He is likeable for his openness about himself and his sincere concern for others.

Hoping to sign a contract with a publishing house as a style editor, Tom came to Moscow on a three-month visitor's visa that he was issued within two months after applying. The initial bliss of finally being with his wife was interrupted by the awareness that time was running out, and his visitor's visa might expire before he found a job. It took the entire three months Tom had on his visa to get a commitment from one of the publishing houses to hire him. One publisher had no job openings; another would not take on an English style editor who did not know Russian; and still another could not make a decision because one key person was on sick leave for quite awhile. One of the frustrating aspects of doing any kind of business in the Soviet Union is that seldom are the full responsibilities of one person transferred to another in his or her absence, so many urgent problems are put on hold, sometimes for weeks at a time.

When the long-awaited day came and Tom signed his contract with Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, he was finally able to sleep easily. However, unlike Tracy and other young mothers who enjoy the freedom of doing their work at home, Tom would prefer to be in an office situation where he could meet other people and get practice speaking Russian. At home he speaks only English with Rita.

"So the first problem I had was this feeling of isolation," complained Tom. "I have a lot of work to do, and Rita helps me when it is necessary to compare the English translation with

the Russian text. We don't have that many friends yet; so I am spending an awful lot of time in the apartment speaking English. I could be anywhere in the world doing that."

Tom hopes to acquire at least the rudiments of Russian by doing the shopping. This forces him to speak the language and breaks the sense of isolation, at least temporarily. Tom said that his previous visits to the Soviet Union had prepared him for the different shopping system.¹ "If anything, I am surprised by the variety of food," he commented. "I now eat better than I have in years. Rita never cooked very often when she lived with her mother, but now she cooks very well. I like to cook too. It usually takes a little longer to get a meal on the table because the food requires more preparing. In New York I would often have a salad and a steak that I would pick up on my way home from work. For me things take longer here. But I find it's not nearly as difficult as I thought it would be. There are lines for certain things occasionally. But if you don't have the time to wait, at some point later on you can probably get the same item without waiting in line. In other words, shopping is no big deal," concluded Tom.

But shopping jaunts are no compensation for companionship at the workplace. When I was going through my own early immigrant doldrums in 1969, had no Russian friends and felt trapped most of the time in the house with my small son, I would use every opportunity to take trips on the subway or buses and "mingle" with the people. All my troubles would somehow fall back into their proper perspective when I saw other human beings hustling and bustling about, seemingly coping with their problems. And there is something soothing about the Soviet masses who strike up conversations so readily with strangers, so eagerly lend a helping hand, and have such motherly and fatherly faces.

In venturing out on his own, however, Tom has discovered a new facet of his personality. "I feel more responsible for speaking Russian correctly," explained Tom who said that during his numerous trips to the Soviet Union he was not at all self-conscious about talking to Soviets in either broken Russian or Eng-

¹ Not all stores in Moscow are self-service or supermarkets. Older stores, like the ones near Tom's home, usually sell one or more products, so shopping has to be done in a few shops. In such stores the customer selects a product at a counter, pays for it at the cashier, and then picks up the purchase after giving the clerk the check from the cashier.

lish, whether the person understood his language or not. It had not bothered him to be taken for a foreigner, but now he does not want to stand out, to be different. "It's an overwhelming feeling in a way," he said and his voice betrayed his own amazement. "I never felt this way before," he added. "I have become more shy, and I was never an overly confident person to begin with."

Tom told me how in the middle of ordering cheddar cheese at the store, the English words slipped out automatically. "I felt like everybody in the store turned around," he laughed. "I was so afraid someone was going to say, 'Otkuda vy?' (Where are you from?) You know? It's irrational. I never felt that way before. If anything, I used to love it when people would ask me where I was from, and I would tell them. These people would usually be very interested and ask me all sorts of questions about what I thought of the two countries; nobody was ever hostile. Now I guess I just want people to think I belong here."

Nobody in the apartment building where Tom and Rita live, at least as far as they know, is aware of Tom's origins. He purposely does not speak English with Rita in the hallways or the elevator. There are several senior citizens who spend a lot of time outside the entrance way chatting, elderly women who are interested in everyone. Tom has a fantasy: "I've been thinking all along that what I should do is go out there, sit down with them and say 'Hello. I'd like to practice speaking Russian with you,' and just have it out. It would be wonderful for my Russian because Rita and I just can't break the habit of talking together in English. I also think it would help me get over this fear, this self-consciousness."

It is not as if Tom has never told anyone in the Soviet Union that he has come to stay. He just has not yet broken the ice with the people he has to live with every day in the same building and shop with in the same stores. But in casual meetings he has come right out with it and said he has moved from the United States to the Soviet Union. Usually the statement gets a matter-of-fact response—"Oh, that's nice!" But occasionally a Soviet will find the fact incredible. "This taxi driver I was riding with once," recalled Tom, "just couldn't believe I would come to live in the Soviet Union, because he figured I could live so much better in the United States, be rich. But in fact, I'm better off here."

Tom explained that this is a personal feeling. He does not believe that anybody in his position would be better off in the Soviet Union rather than the United States. But for him it works. "Having a decent place to live and paying hardly any rent for it (just a few rubles) is an advantage that cannot be overstated," said Tom. "Our apartment is always so cheerful. It has a southwestern exposure, so all afternoon the sun comes pouring in. And we have a long balcony. I have a good job, no financial worries, and several new-found interests. I really enjoy gardening at my in-law's summer house outside Moscow, I find myself interested in wildlife, and I am reading much more than I ever did. This place is just conducive to it. I've become closer with Rita's family, her sister and her nephew, genuinely closer. At the summer house we're all there together. That has made me feel much more a part of things in this country."

Tom misses his friends and family, but is in no hurry to leave his new life in Moscow to visit New York. It is a good sign that Tom has come to stay. "One of the many reasons why I don't think I'll ever go back to live in the United States," he confided, "is that I think it is great being an immigrant in the Soviet Union. I love the idea of having children and them having children, and my grandchildren thinking, yes, my grandfather was an American. I like what I'm starting."

Epilogue

When Tom Crane said he liked the idea of his grandchildren someday being able to say, "My grandfather was an American," I thought about the many people in the Soviet Union who can already claim to be the grandchildren of Americans and Canadians. I believe there will be more and more like them as time goes on. As North Americans increasingly come to visit the Soviet Union, more people like Tom will find life in this country appealing and will choose to move to the U.S.S.R.

While talking to Tom, who is still adjusting to life in the Soviet Union, and to the other people raised in North America who have already made the adjustment, I could not help but compare their experiences with my own in this country over the past two decades. I find more similarities than differences. It brought back memories of incidents and feelings I had long forgotten, and prompted me to analyze and assess more carefully my own years in the U.S.S.R.

Since I settled in Moscow in 1975 with my two children, everything that I wanted out of life and prompted me to make that decision has come to pass. My oldest son Andrei, now twenty, received an excellent education in the Soviet school system. He then passed the gruelling entrance exams into Moscow University, one of the most prestigious institutions of higher education in the U.S.S.R. My younger son, Gregory, now fifteen, is still attending secondary school. By the time he graduates he will have taken difficult courses in Russian grammar, literature, algebra, geometry, world history, the history of the U.S.S.R., the Soviet constitution and law, geography, biology, physics, astronomy, drafting, chemistry, a foreign language, art, music, and physical education. These are all required subjects.

My children were indeed "indoctrinated" at school with the humane principle of internationalism, which teaches respect for

the peoples of all countries and all the ethnic groups inhabiting the Soviet Union; they have been taught to help others and to appreciate the need for a peaceful world free of weapons. This does not mean that every person who finishes a Soviet school is an ideal human being. However, the majority of them do enter adulthood with the self-confidence that comes from having been in a healthy school environment where deep friendships develop and where teachers and students for the most part treat each other with respect and consideration. Andrei has put it to me in these words: "Mom, I've had a terrific life; it couldn't have been better."

My own general assessment of my life in this country is the same. While I was raising my children as a single parent I never had to worry about the future. We had a comfortable two-bedroom apartment on the outskirts of Moscow near forests and parks. A subway station nearby took us into downtown Moscow within half an hour—for just five cents. In my neighborhood, which one could walk across in perhaps fifteen minutes, we had numerous high rise apartment buildings, three schools, three childcare centers, a large movie theater, an adult outpatient health center with specialists in all important fields, a similar center for children, a supermarket, several smaller grocery stores, a post office, bank, two beauty salons, two barber shops and abundant greenery. I never had to worry about a landlord's caprices, because we did not have one; the apartment was mine as long as I wanted to stay in the Soviet Union. I never gave a thought to how much I was spending on everyday expenses because I knew I would never be unemployed. I always had money left over at the end of the month. Somehow enough got saved throughout the year to pay for vacations and large purchases for the home.

The only difference now is that my income as a translator and writer has risen because I have more time to work now that I do not have small children. After living ten years in the neighborhood I described, we moved to a newer one in 1985. It has the same kinds of public facilities, and my current two-bedroom apartment is much larger.

Not having to worry about basic living conditions, most of my emotional energy has been focused on my personal development and that of my sons, rather than on the everyday anxieties of making a living, as had been the case before I left the United

States. I was able to graduate from Moscow University with a master's degree in cultural anthropology because of the benefits working students have in the Soviet Union—no night shifts during the academic year, one month's paid leave from work during semester exams twice a year in addition to the regular one-month paid vacation that is the right of all working people. Working and going to school at night, and looking after two young boys was not easy, but it was possible. The school, childcare center and Young Pioneers' Palace (a recreation center for school students) helped me take care of the youngsters; neighbors, friends and co-workers were also supportive.

After I received my master's degree in 1982 I wanted to write a doctoral thesis in cultural anthropology. After giving this considerable thought, I decided to study the adaptation process of North Americans in the Soviet Union, which is how the idea for this book developed. I felt that being an insider in this community would enable me to delve more deeply into the subject and ascertain the validity of the results. I am currently enrolled in a doctoral program with the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences Institute of Ethnography. This program, which is tuition-free, like all education in this country, gives working people like myself a five-year time limit to complete the dissertation.

I have already drawn some conclusions from my research about what North Americans like and do not like in the Soviet Union, and what kind of people tend to adjust well to the new world. Common dislikes are basically the same as for those of native-born Soviet citizens—bureaucratic procedures, a poorly organized service industry with a prevalence of either indifferent and sometimes even rude clerks, and workmanship that is usually inferior to North American standards. Narrow job opportunities for non-citizen residents is another complaint.

Americans and Canadians must deal with bureaucracy in their own state and federal civil service branches, but the private sector is generally free of red tape. Since almost all spheres of life in the Soviet Union are government-run, bureaucratic procedures are more widespread. However, attempts are being made to cut down on paperwork and unnecessary procedures in industry and everyday life. As for the service industry, it is not nearly as bad as it is portrayed by the commercial mass media in the West, but it is still a nuisance to North Americans who have been brought up on "service with a smile." Since the 27th Party Congress

held in 1986, signs of change have been evident in the services, as well as in workmanship. If it would become easier for non-Soviets to work in fields other than translating and style editing, the influx of newcomers would be much greater. I receive letters from and hear frequently of North Americans wanting to work in the Soviet Union, but who are not qualified for the jobs offered at foreign language publishing houses and the foreign service of Radio Moscow.

What the North Americans who have come to stay in the Soviet Union like about their lives is job and housing security, social benefits such as unlimited sick leave, long maternity leaves (one and a half years, without losing job seniority), tuition-free educational opportunities, Soviet hospitality, the high value placed on friendship and concern for others, even strangers, and confidence in both the Soviet government's and the people's sincere desire and efforts for world peace.

Another important attraction, I believe, is the lack of stress one feels in a country where even big cities have so little crime that people take for granted that they are safe in the streets and in their homes any time of day or night. The low crime rate is a reflection of the social justice of a society that has no unemployment, no people who are homeless or hungry, no ghettos, relatively little drug abuse, proper medical care readily available for all, and few alienated people prone to senseless crimes.

The North Americans who remain in the Soviet Union typically have a working-class background and socialist leanings. Generally they are optimistic, bold and strong individuals who are prepared to venture into another world. This may have something to do with the fact that they come from countries historically populated by immigrants, that their parents, grandparents or great grandparents were immigrants in the United States or Canada, were people with a venturesome and pioneering spirit. It is possibly because of these same character traits that they got along well in their own countries. They are almost always outgoing people who make friends easily anywhere. Additional important factors are family ties that have become stronger in the Soviet Union and a good command of the Russian language, facilitating closer friendships with the people and a deeper understanding of how the socialist system works.

Most working-class immigrants from North America obtained a higher education in the Soviet Union, and their children too.

Such advancement has been a general trend throughout Soviet society where a person's financial status is irrelevant in such matters. What's more, immigrants are not the "last to be hired and first to be fired." They do not do the country's "dirty work," but hold jobs in some of the most prestigious fields. This also applies to non-citizens who mainly work as translators, a highly respected and well-paying field in the Soviet Union.

The adaptation process is made easier thanks to a general accepting attitude toward newcomers among the Soviet people and officials, who try to help them overcome initial difficulties. At the same time, my interviews showed that attitudes to the foreign-born and foreigners on the part of ordinary citizens and officials have not always been the same. To a large extent, negative attitudes were due to the domestic and international situations, such as during the late 1930s (pre-World War II), the late 1940s and early 1950s (beginning of the Cold War). Undoubtedly, some of the cautious attitudes toward the foreign-born and foreigners that were fostered while Stalin headed the Communist Party, can be felt today among the people, and especially when dealing with officialdom. However, the bureaucratism that has allowed such attitudes to persist long after they evolved in totally different circumstances, is now under heavy attack, offering hope that these problems will become increasingly rare.

The purely emotional attraction to the life-style, the culture and the people must not be overlooked. This feeling is harder to explain, perhaps in the same way that it is difficult to list the reasons for loving another person. I know that I am not alone in having this emotional attraction, as many of the stories in this book have shown. I even have unexpected company in this respect, as indicated by Patty Beryozkin's recollection of her fellow students in the Russian department of S.U.N.Y. who, while speaking so negatively about their experiences in the Soviet Union, were vying with each other to get back.

Professor Lynn Turgeon of Hofstra University, who has repeatedly visited the Soviet Union and who teaches comparative economics, said after reading Patty's story that his own observations of anti-Soviet scholars have been the same as hers. "This country has a certain magnetism to even anti-Soviet people," he pointed out. "They can hardly wait to have another excuse to come back. I noticed that when I was lecturing at Moscow University for three months as a professor under the cultural exchange, I ran

into many I.R.E.X. scholars. They had all these negative things to say about Soviet life, but in the next breath they were plotting to get back." Professor Turgeon asked me to try and explain this attraction. I believe that the various stories told in this book, put together, answer that question. However, my own opinion is that it is the traditional warmth and hospitality of the peoples of the Soviet Union, qualities that have been reinforced by the socialist system, which promotes mutual assistance and concern for the well-being of others. Consequently, people in the Soviet Union do care about others. While motivated to personal achievement by the accessibility of the educational system, they are more likely to help the people around them also get ahead rather than compete in a cut-throat way.

The histories of the North American immigrants, some of which cover over sixty years in the Soviet Union, reveal that it is a place where people can lead normal, happy lives, lives that are interesting and fulfilling. Their stories carry an even more important message—that people reared in North America and the Soviet Union, living in one country as neighbors, friends, relatives and co-workers, have found a way to understand and trust each other. If that is possible in one country, then surely we can share the same planet, finding ways to build a better, peaceful world together.

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Impressions
of the
USSR

Paula Garb

Paula GARB

They Came to Stay

"This book destroys the 'Evil Empire' myth. It is the story of three generations of North American immigrants in the Soviet Union who have found it possible to make a satisfactory life there. Some of them were of Russian origin; some were not. Some were working class; some were not. Some were communists; some were simply attracted to a more secure life-style. A splendid book."

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"Paula Garb's fascinating account of how selective North Americans adjusted to the Soviet way of life since 1917 deserves a wide audience. Americans are no doubt puzzled by the return of Soviet emigres to the USSR, but they will also no doubt be intrigued by the various factors underlying the emigration of Americans and Canadians to the Soviet Union."

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"To some Americans *They Came to Stay* will be a rebuff and to others an explanation of the unresolved paradoxes of the Soviet people and system. Paula Garb makes a strong case for her values and that of other North Americans who have found their niche in Soviet society."

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They Came to Stay

